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PC GAMES ADDICT

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AUGUST 2004
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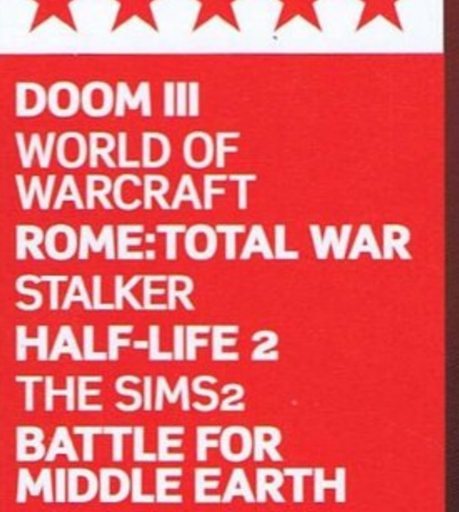
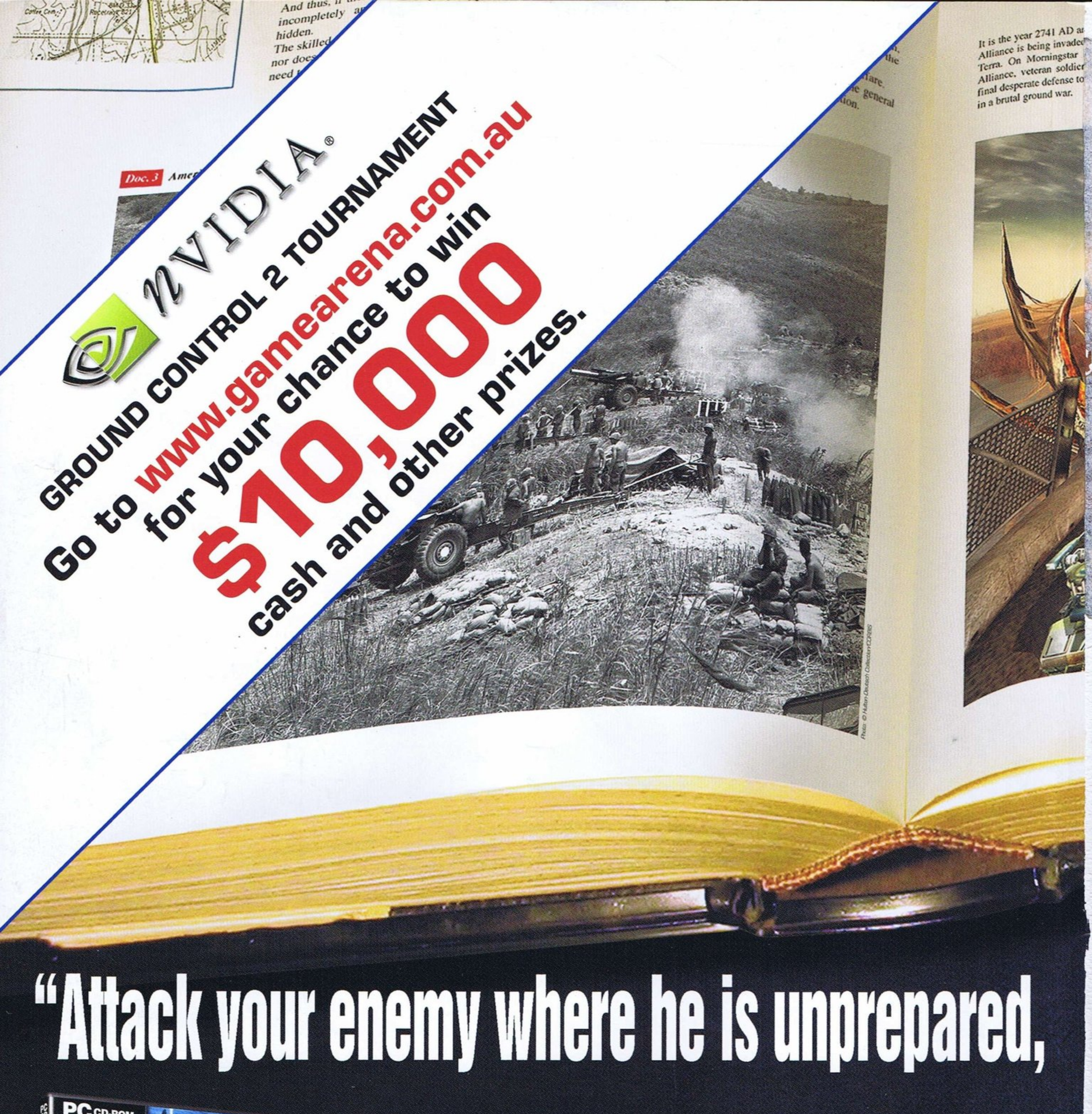


DIY MODS MAKE A FAR CRY MAP | **SPLINTER CELL 3 SCOOP**



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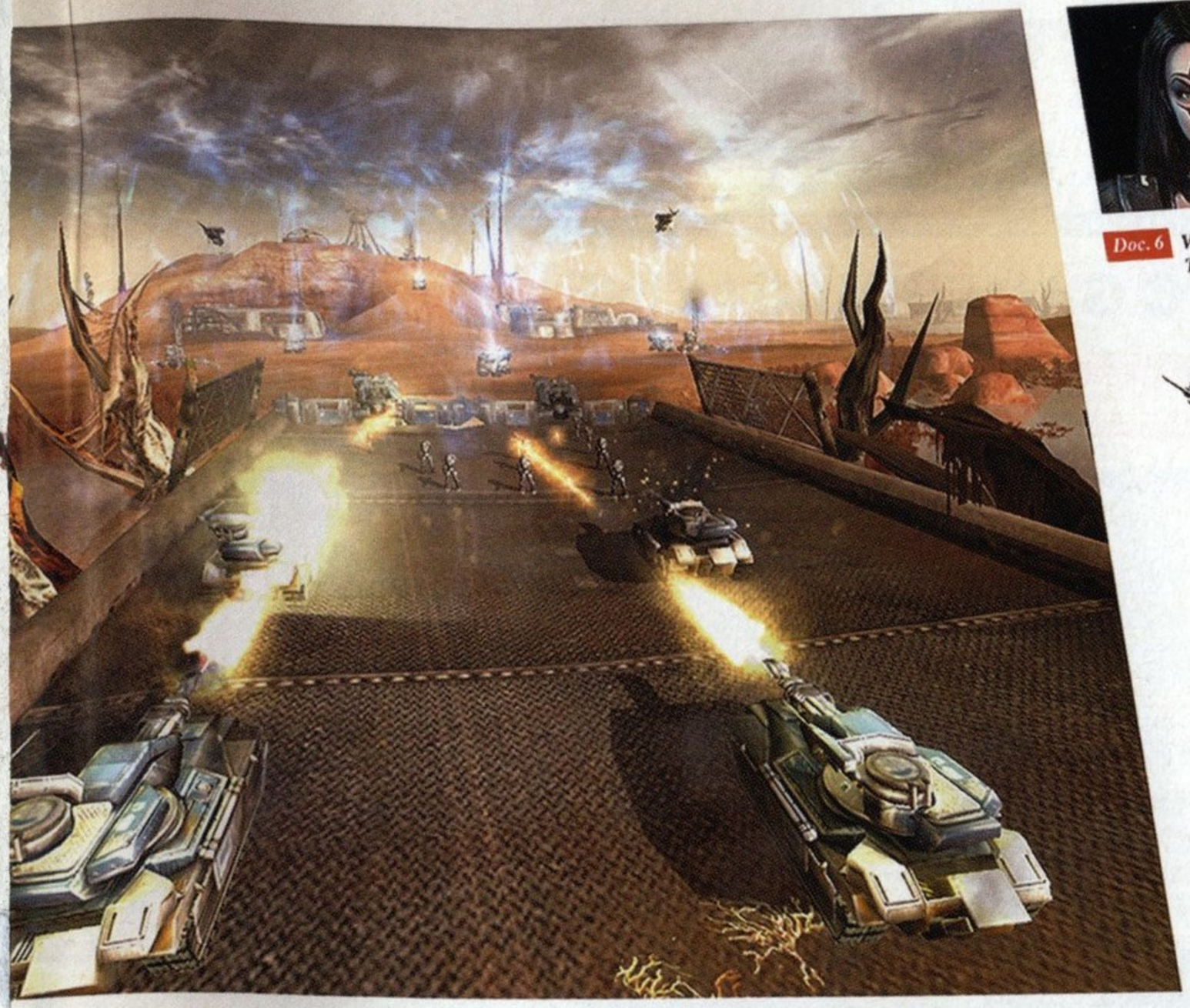
...and the peace-loving Northern Star ...ed by the warmongering Empire of ... Prime, the capital planet of the ...r Captain Jacob Angelus leads a ...o save his people from annihilation

Doc. 6 *Vlaana Azleaa*
Terran Empire

"Ground Control II may well end up being the strategy game of the year"
PC Zone

"We're really looking forward to the fully-finished shell-shocker"
PC Gamer



Doc.7 *Northern Star Alliance Army fighting on Morningstar Prime*

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DERWENT HOWARD

This month, we've been...

WEARING TIGHTS...
...but only in the name of justice and freedom. See our review of *City of Heroes*.

CHOMPING MARINES...
...while playing as aliens in *Natural Selection*, a top mod in the new Extra Life section.

DODGING BULLETS...
...in the terrifying *FEAR*, just one of the new games premiered in this issue. We've got the scoop on this horror shooter, plus all the latest on more of the games that shone at E3.

MAKING MAPS...
...as will you be once you see our new D-I-Y pages. This month's lesson, create a *Far Cry* level.

GIVING AWAY UT2004!
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We're all ears

The things I do for gaming journalism. It's a good thing my friends are so accustomed to my shameless antics that I'm unlikely to cop much stick over this one. Even if I do start to receive a bit of a ribbing, I can point to the metaphorical reasons for making a goose (er… bunny) of myself.

We've been listening to reader feedback, and this new look PC GAMES ADDICT is the result. Of course, you'll no doubt have an opinion on our new format, so that's why those enormous erect lugs are still popping out of my cranium. We'd love your feedback. In fact, we're still running our reader survey at www.pcga.com.au, so you can pass it on and have a chance at winning $2,000 worth of new PC gear.

Be sure to indulge in our new Extra-Life section, a window into the world of PC gaming that takes place after that initial game purchase.

And make sure you see Your Chance on page 48, a prelude to Your Section of the magazine.

Till next time, may your frags be many and your ping remain puny.

DAN TOOSE
EDITOR

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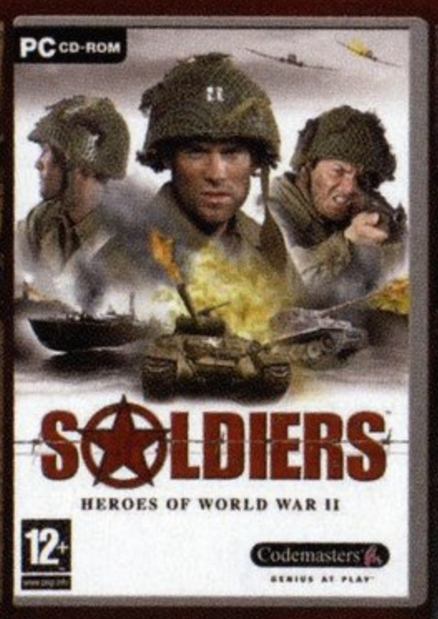

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The return of the stealth king!

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Making magazines, beating off women with a stick. No, it's not just another day at PCGA...

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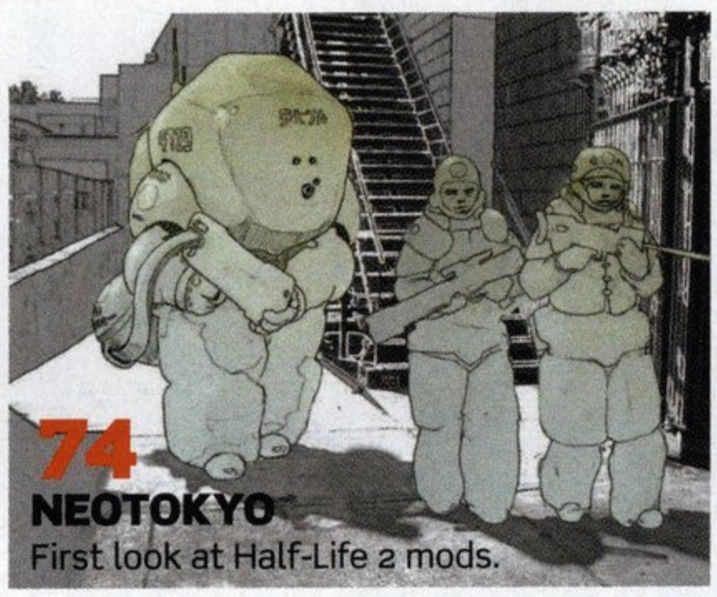

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Making war look very attractive.

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Shiny prizes to be won every month, plus a prelude to more ways to win free stuff from next issue onwards...

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Buttons to press and tricks to try.

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And now we can sleep again.

ON THE DISC PC GAMES ADDICT is more than just a magazine. Articles sporting this sign are enhanced by extras on the disc.

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Eyewitness

TEN MOST WANTED

Latest info on the games *you* want

1 HALF-LIFE 2 COUNTER STRIKE REBORN

Valve dropped jaws at this year's E3 gameshow with *Counter-Strike Source* – the original *Counter-Strike* remade using *Half-Life 2* graphics. Valve demonstrated the classic *CS* level De_Aztec, rendered by *HL2*'s Source engine. And it looked as if the ageing online shooter had slugged a potion of youth, as our mouse claws twitched with irresistable desire. As predicted in PCGA 18, Valve have decided to port, according to MD Gabe Newell, "all original *Half-Life* content" over to Source. This range includes the original *Half-Life*, the expansion packs and *Day of Defeat*. Valve plan to release the newly Sourced material on Steam, their monthly subscription broadband service. *Counter-Strike* Source will apparently be released at the same time as *Half-Life 2*, and will be part of *HL2*'s special edition. *Counter-Strike* Source isn't, as some internet reports concluded, *Half-Life 2*'s full multiplayer.

Official ETA Summer
We say September at best

LEVEL-UP
The designers are adding new map features, like this stepped aztec shrine.

THE CLANGERS
Counter-Strike finally gets physics. Bouncing barrels explode and whip across the level, burning the unwary and clanging into bodies.

LET'S GET PHYSICAL
Source's physical prowess rewrites the level. Sound echoes off walls, bullets ricochet and penetrate wooden doors.

He may not look 'summery', but that's when we'll see him.

2 DOOM III WHISPERS

As stated last issue, no PC *Doom III* showing at E3. id don't have the time to stuff about PRing it to a

ess

We hope *Rome*'s legion of TV extras have Equity cards and agents.

bunch of jetlagged, sweaty journos. The Xbox version was on show, in the form of an almost pitch-black trailer. Still, we had to watch... a slow-burn montage of empty corridors, flickering lights, and your lone marine poking his head where he shouldn't... the atmosphere was straight out of Aliens. And the tension could only be broken one way: our man set upon by the hounds of Hell – sporting more teeth than a dentist's dustbin.

Activision also narrowed *Doom*'s release date down to a helpful "winter". The sooner id finish it, the sooner they can start working on that non-*Quake*, non-*Doom* game we've been hearing about.

Official ETA Winter
We say Could make August

Have hammer, will hammer. *World of Warcraft*

3 ROME: TOTAL WAR TV STAR

Not content with wowing our roving Jimbob Cottee at E3, Creative Assembly have announced the second TV show that will depict ancient aggro with *Rome*'s 3D RTS engine. Decisive Battles is a 13-part series on the History Channel, recreating the most brutal Roman bloodbaths for our amusement. Can it possibly be better than Time Commanders? Ahem.

The Holy Grail of most *Total War* aficionados though, is campaign-based multiplayer, but it's never been included in the final game. We have the definitive statement for *Rome*, and it's an outright no. The story from Creative Assembly is that completion of a multiplayer campaign could take up to two years, and that no-one in their right mind would want to play for such an insane length of time. They're probably right, but still, just imagine it...

Official ETA September
We say It's bang on target

The *World of Warcraft* NPC square-dancing competition.

4 WORLD OF WARCRAFT LOCAL LOVE?

It's coming, but exactly which servers Australian gamers will be logging on to when they play is at present a mystery. Vivendi spoke to us about the obvious pros and cons of the possible courses of action they ▶

It's not long before he's set on by the hounds of Hell

WIN A GAME

MY MOST WANTED

Register your excitement!

This Most Wanted chart was voted for by the PCGA staff, but soon it will be pieced together by the readers of these hallowed pages. Every issue we'll compile your votes for the upcoming games you're most excited about and then hunt down the latest news, screenshots and info we can uncover about them. One voter each issue wins a game!

MY TOP FIVE MOST WANTED GAMES:

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____
5 _____

Name _____

Address _____

_____

_____

In 25 Words what's best about your #1 game?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Send your entry to:
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Or email pcga@derwenthoward.com.au
Or vote by web www.pcga.com.au

YOUR 10 MOST WANTED

Off they went with a trumpety trump, trump, trump, arrrrgh!

could take, and they'd like your feedback too! Which sounds better:

A) Wait for a local server to be set up in Australia to ensure for the most minimal latency issues possible. (knowing that this may result in a 6 to 12 month delay in launch) or

B) Have a special Au/NZ server set up in the US that only Au/NZ players can log on to (so all players face roughly the same latency), and have *WoW* go on sale with the US launch.

Send on your thoughts to: **wowaustralia@vugames.com.au** to help ensure that the local industry gets the feedback it needs to deliver what the Australian gamers want.

Strangely, one of our favourite *WoW* activities is dying. The way the game deals with death amply demonstrates just how lovingly crafted it is. Uniquely, once you're dead, you're given two options rather than the usual one. Either respawn as usual or become a ghost. The world becomes a very different place when you play in spirit form. You can no longer see or be seen, except by other ghosts, and you can only chat locally. No long distance telepathy allowed!

It's such an inventive alternative to just resurrecting your character elsewhere on the map that we had to tell you about it.

Official ETA August
We say MMORPGs and Blizzard always slip – October

5 THE SIMS 2 FACE PAINTING

EA have let slip the mugs of phwoar, and released the *Sims 2 Body Shop*: character-customisation tools for the upcoming Will Wright sequel. It's the most complete creation kit we've ever seen, with every face and body attribute fully modifiable. The resulting characters can be saved and used in *The Sims 2*, or spread on the Net. Just five minutes is enough to create a simple character, but spend time and you could easily make a close approximation of anyone you wish. We included the *Bodyshop* on last issue's DVD disc.

Official ETA October
We say No one really knows

6 BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH BIG RISK

Interesting news for fans of all things Tolkien. One of the issues being discussed at the *LotR BFME* stand at E3: whether or not to include cinematic cutscenes in the final game.

However, the development team haven't decided yet if they want to risk the consequences of taking control away from the player at vital moments, just to show off recreated scenes from the movie in-game. Usually, we're pretty much against the loss of direct control in-game, but the LotR scenes look so damn good, we have to admit that it would add to the atmosphere. The question is, how many times can you see the same scene before it serves purely to peeve the player?

Official ETA September
We say Looking steady

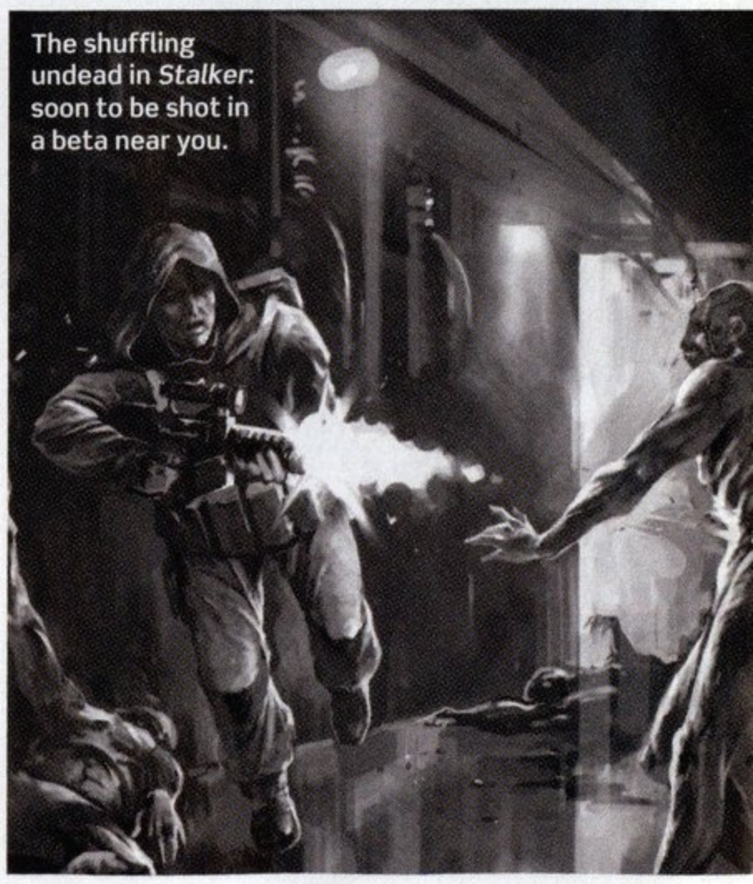
It's tempting to take *The Sims 2 Body Shop* that one step too far.

Stalker's DX9 lighting is saucier than Tabasco.

7 STALKER BETA UPDATE

Further to our feature last issue, E3 also brought the news that *Stalker* would have a public beta. The Chernobyl-based FPS's multiplayer component still needs some serious testing, and we assume that *Stalker* will be going through the same bug-testing beta that Ubisoft's classic *Far Cry* went through. Keep an eye on the official website for more info (**www.stalker-game.com**), and we'll do what we can to secure some PC GA beta places. We'll see you in there.

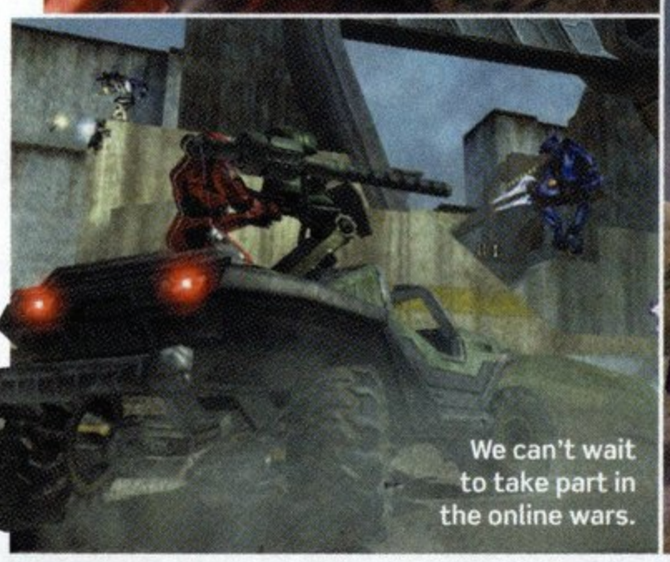
Official ETA Christmas
We say 2005. Guaranteed.



The shuffling undead in *Stalker*: soon to be shot in a beta near you.

"What do ye mean we have to wait 12 moons if wait for a local server?"

It's art from *Battle for Middle Earth*. We suspect this isn't Arwen or Eowyn...



We can't wait to take part in the online wars.

You can play as the Covenant in multiplayer.

ONE TO WATCH

HALO 2

■ **Publisher** Microsoft ■ **PC ETA** Summer 2005

This Xbox release is so important that Peter Moore, Microsoft's Xbox Sales Chief, tattooed the date on his arm (although we did catch a whiff of Biro). To complement the single player shown at last year's E3, Bungie rolled out the multiplayer this year. Destructible vehicles and scenery, and the ability to play as the Covenant, headed the feature list. PC version bound to follow, but no official word yet.

8 THE MOVIES MAKING THEM

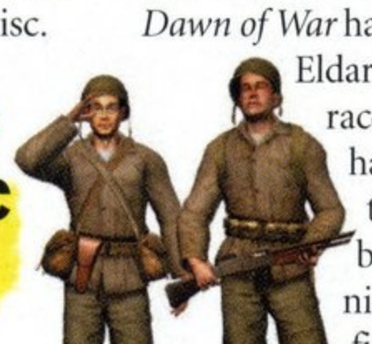
Peter Molyneux showed off his machinima magic by releasing this short film he made in *The Movies*. The short B-movie rip-off called 'It Came From Uranus' is our first glimpse at the capabilities of the engine. It's a bit like watching an infinitely subtle version of *The Sims*, with the camera pushed right in on two young lovers. Sadly for the girl, the bloke has a touch of alien in him, turning into a lizard midway through his date. We'll leave the conclusion as a cliffhanger. See next month's disc.

Official ETA Christmas
We say Christmas 2005, that is

9 MOH: PACIFIC ASSAULT BUSTED

The Punkbuster anti-cheating system will be included in the next Medal Of Honour. This is good news because *Allied Assault*'s online play was ruined by its lack of cheat protection – destroying a potentially great multiplayer experience. But rejoice, for the cheats will be caught and bitchslapped from every Punkbuster-enabled server. As for how *MoH* will play, we've landed a preview on page 33.

Official ETA November
We say On target



10 DAWN OF WAR NEW RACE

And finally at number 10, the fourth faction in *Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War* has been revealed as the Eldar – an ancient alien race whose numbers have dwindled over the last few millennia, but who are still pretty nifty when it comes to fighting. They employ some very neat units, such as the teleporter-equipped Warp Spiders who wink in and out of existence around the battlefield, and anti-gravity tanks that skim around the battlefield at high speed. Keep tabs on the newly launched website for up-to-date info: www.dawnofwargame.com.

Official ETA September
We say Looks bang on

Readers: having a war at dawn is a surefire way to upset the neighbours.

F.E.A.R. WILL GIVE YOU THE FEAR BECAUSE...
›It's a fantastic-looking shooter with a truly terrifying twist ›It's Die Hard meets The Blair Witch Project with a nod to The Matrix ›Monolith have an impeccable track record

F.E.A.R.

Scoop!

Frightening, Exciting, Atmospheric, Rare – need we say more?

Had there been a prize at this year's E3 for convenient acronyms, *FEAR* would have walked it. As it happens, there wasn't, so instead, Monolith's latest project had to settle for the little-known but highly sought-after 'The Only Game That Made Ross Jump' award.

First Encounter Assault Recon is, in a very obvious way, a shooter. You're a Special Forces chappy, you have guns, you infiltrate, you shoot the bad men, you exfiltrate (note to self: do I need to exfiltrate the coffee machine?) and go home for tea and crumpets. However, in a way that neither these screenshots nor the video on the discs indicate, strange things are afoot in the world of our hero.

Unlike most shooters, *FEAR* bleeds a supernatural edge into proceedings: an unseen, destructive force that no number of rounds-per-minute or layers of Kevlar can stop. There's a ghostly girl, and wherever she goes, the military seem to fall apart in gushing, inky torrents of blood.

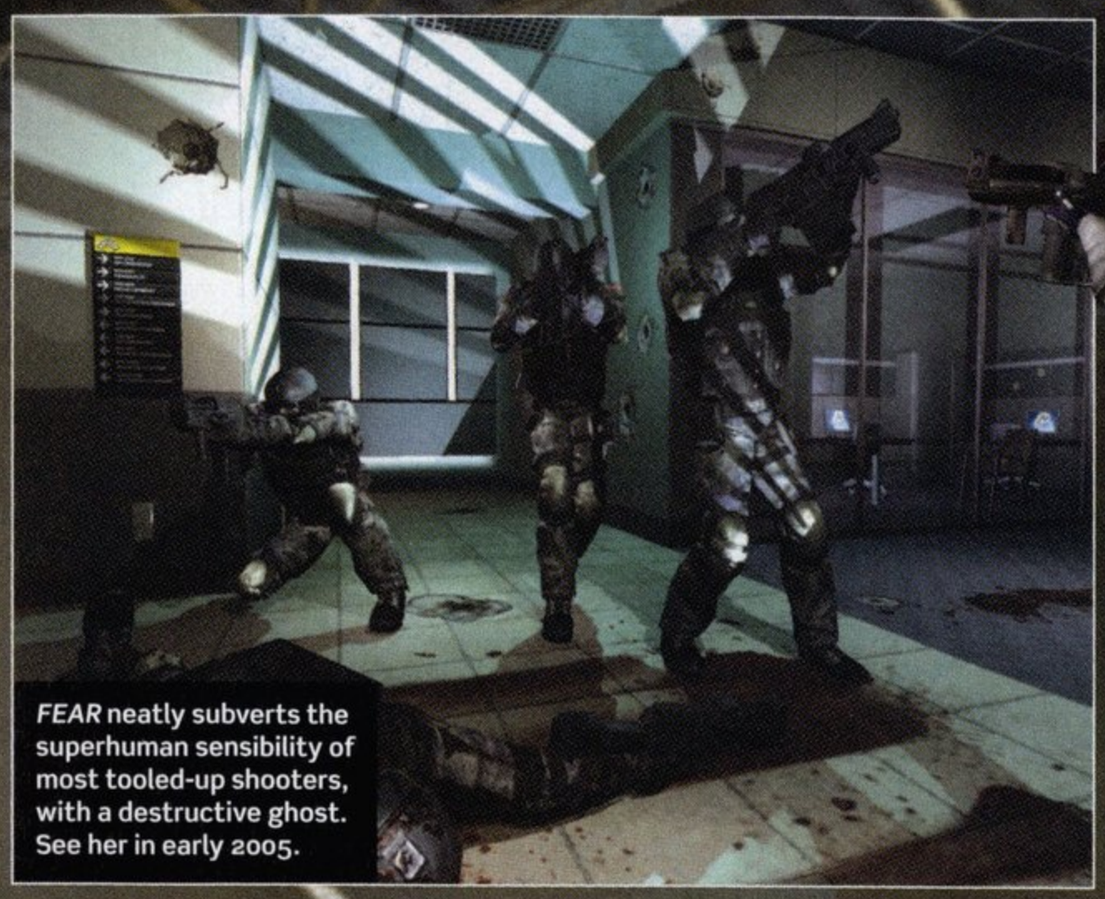
FEAR throws in a few twists, too, with an element of bullet-time-camera-play. At close quarters, you can physically assault opponents, pushing and kicking them back to where a killing shot can be delivered. Impressive physics and particle effects make encounters in destructible environments all the more thrilling.

Fear it.

ROSS ATHERTON

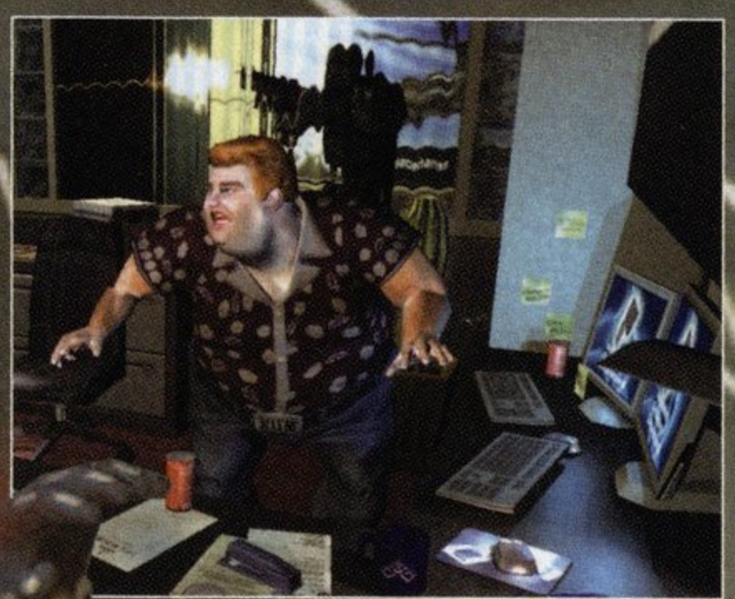
ON THE DISC Hurry up, man. Eyeball the video and stash of screenshots.

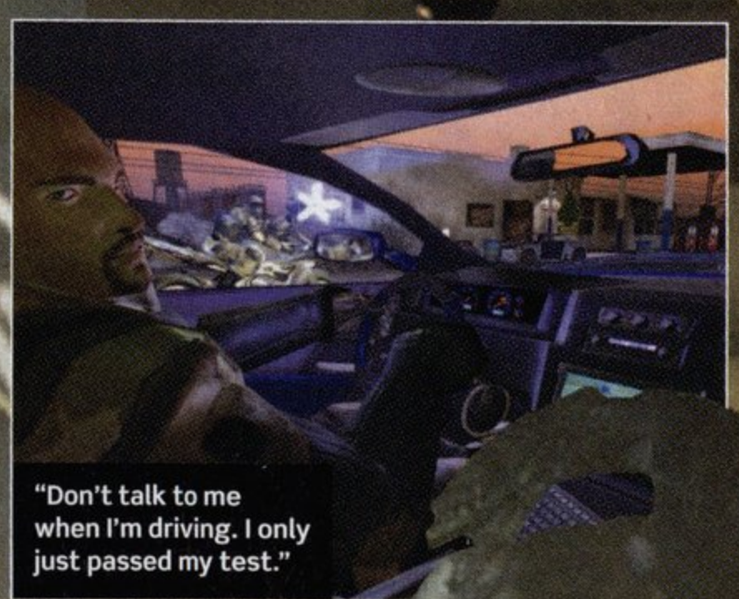
README
Publisher Vivendi
Developer Monolith
ETA Early 2005



FEAR neatly subverts the superhuman sensibility of most tooled-up shooters, with a destructive ghost. See her in early 2005.

Elite forces can run around looking as special as they like. They can't match a girl who makes them cry blood.





"Don't talk to me when I'm driving. I only just passed my test."

GTA: San Andreas

No faults planned for latest *Grand Theft Auto*

Let's make one thing clear: San Andreas is not a city. It's a whole damn *state*. Rockstar's definitive take on California will feature three cities, and will be four times bigger than *Vice City*'s twin islands.

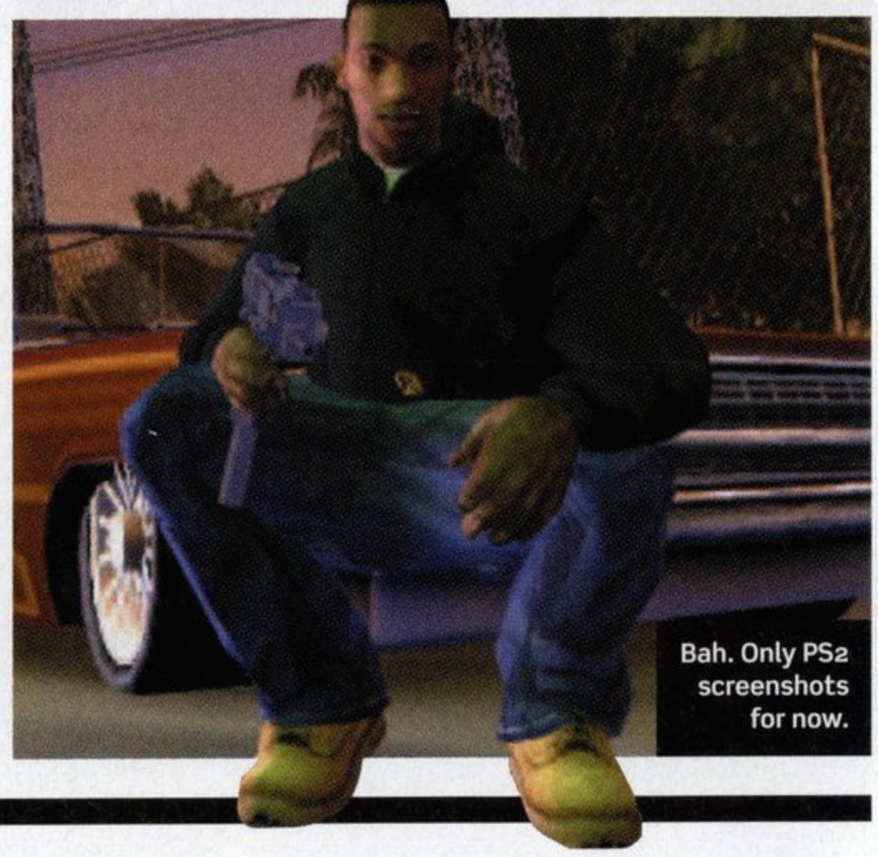
The *Grand Theft Auto* series moved into 3D with *GTA III* and *Vice City*, pitching you into seedy worlds as an up-and-coming villain. *San Andreas* shows even more ambition. Apart from its size, it's focusing on yet more ways of interacting with the world. You return to your family home in Los Santos (think Los Angeles) to find gang warfare on your doorstep, and must recruit your own gang members as well as carry out missions.

You'll eventually own businesses in all three cities: Los Santos, San Fierro (San Francisco) and Las Venturra (Las Vegas). You'll even be able to drive between them across dusty landscapes.

It's interesting to note that you'll be playing as a black character, too. A rare opportunity in gaming, so kudos to Rockstar. Some might see the *GTA* series as juvenile, but on this evidence it's anything but.

README

Publisher Rockstar
Developer Rockstar North
ETA Autumn 2005

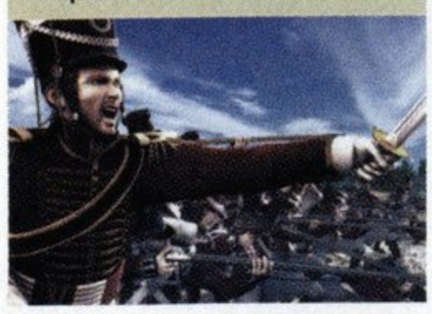

Bah. Only PS2 screenshots for now.

BONEY-FIED STRATEGY

Imperial Glory

Enter the Napoleonic RTS that looks like *Rome* with muskets and cannon.

We've seen *thousands* of flag-waving Napoleonic headcases serve their midget dictator's will. The battlefield shakes as armies pummel each other with fire-trailing cannonballs, then charge headfirst, meeting with a clash of steel. Pyro, of *Commandos* fame, are going for a 19th century multiple wargasm, with ship-to-ship combat, destructible terrain and five power-hungry Imperial armies.



Bet on Soldier

Let the gambling commence

Time to put your virtual money where your imaginary mouth is. *Bet On Soldier* is a counter-terrorist FPS that enables you to bet on the outcome of your battles.

Before you enter combat, you bet on which enemy soldiers you're going to kill. If you meet up in-game, depending on the outcome, you either lose your stake or take the prize calculated against the in-game stats. The theme is applicable to both single player and multiplayer games, and the credits accrued can go to upgrading your character.

As concepts go, it's enough to pique our interest, although there's no more information other than "a corporation-takes-over-the-world-style plot". Less PR speak, more details, Digital Jesters.

README

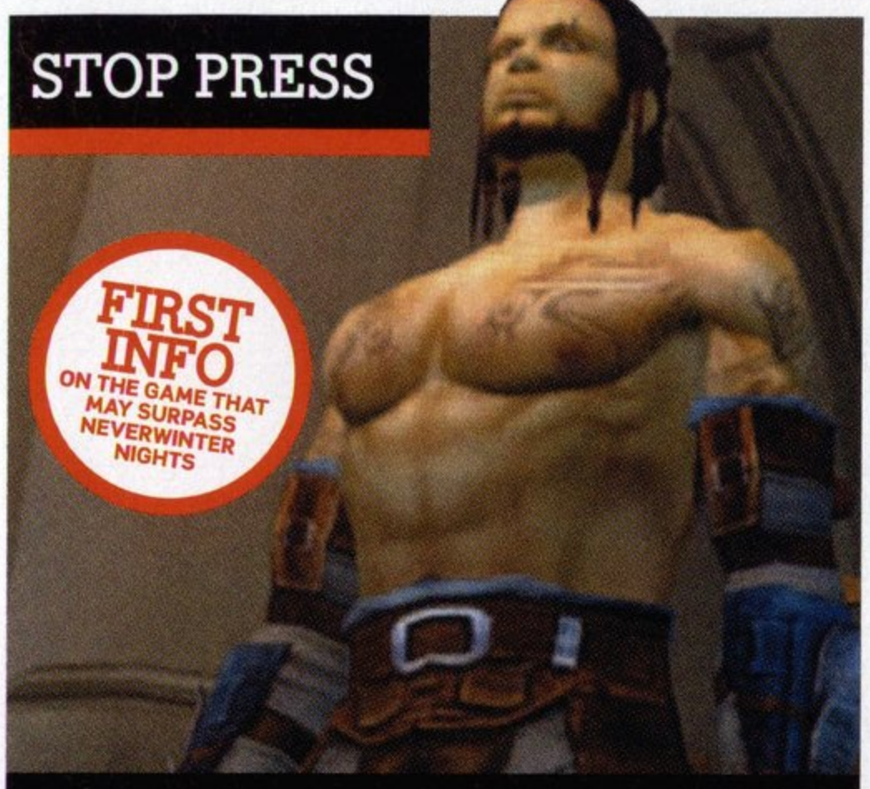
Publisher Digital Jesters
Developer Kylotonn
ETA April 2005

Man on fire! And money in the virtual bank for upgrading your character.

gobbets

I wanna hold your handheld› VIA Technologies and the Ministry of Mobile Affairs have unveiled a PC-based handheld console. Eve has a 533MHz CPU, 128Mb RAM and a 20Gb hard drive, alongside wireless capabilities. It runs Windows XP, and the makers claim it'll run modern games – all we have to do is transfer the game onto the unit via USB.

STOP PRESS



FIRST INFO ON THE GAME THAT MAY SURPASS NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

Bioware reveal their new RPG: Dragon Age...

You might expect the world's best RPG developers, in the aftermath of their excellent *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*, to flex their creative muscles somewhat. It's something of a surprise to learn, then, that Bioware are going back to the high fantasy roots that made their name through classics like the *Baldur's Gate* series and *Neverwinter Nights*.

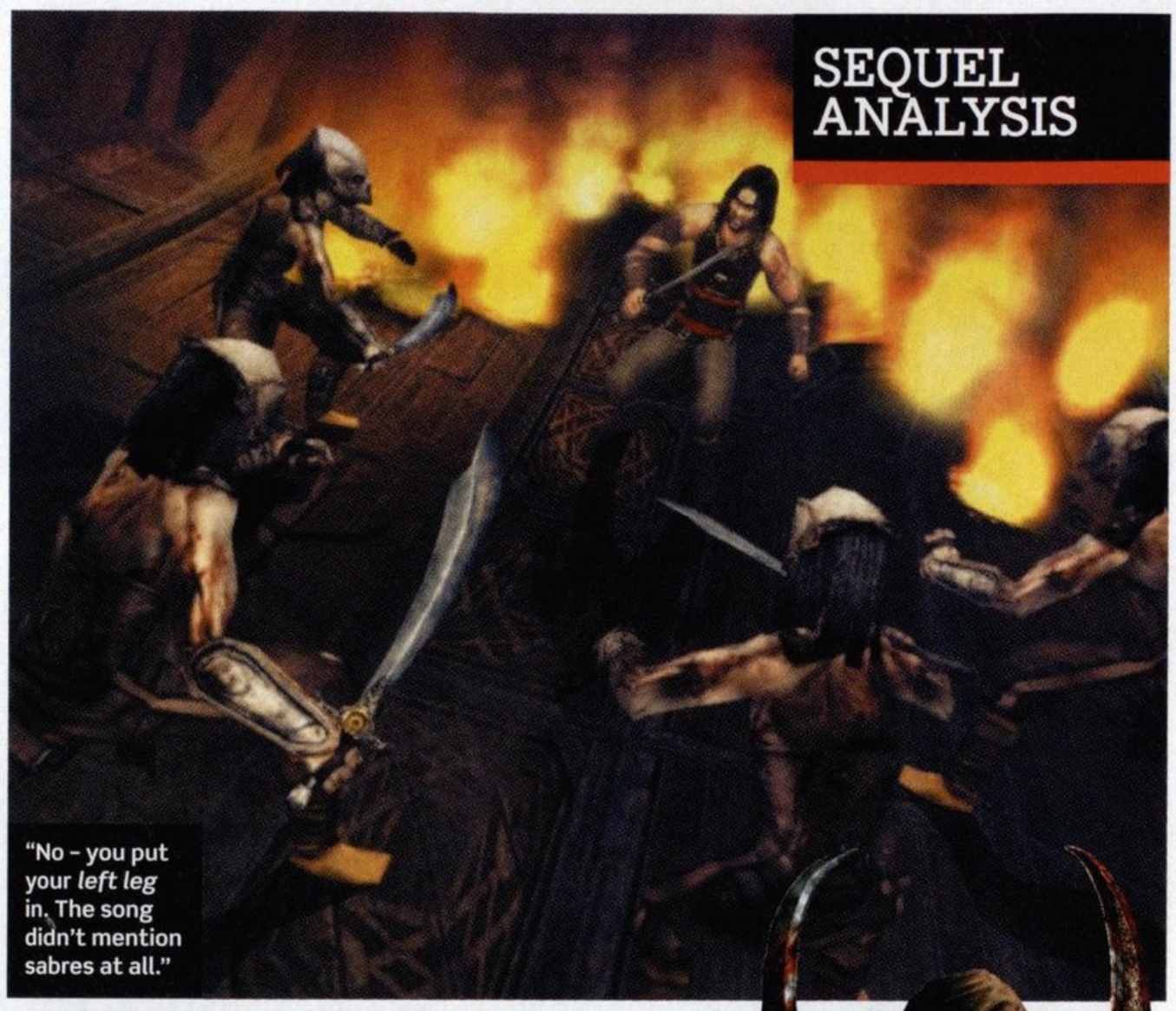
However, *Dragon Age* won't be licensing the D20 rules as featured in Bioware's recent games, so the initial challenge will be to create an underlying set of systems that can provide the game's foundation. Systems aside, *Dragon Age* largely follows in the footsteps of *Neverwinter Nights*, and bears a passing resemblance. Until you see the hundreds of individual characters fighting a massive battle, each splintering the opposition with magic effects – and attacks that are individually lit and animated.

> You see hundreds of individual characters fighting a massive battle

Your main character will be able to recruit a party of between three and five further characters, who'll be totally under your control, as in the *BG* series. We're hoping that Bioware will be able to resurrect the impressive character development and intra-party dialogue delivered by their previous games. Interestingly, the game's main story has two versions; one for single player and one for co-operative play. This is clearly in response to fan feedback for *Neverwinter Nights*, whose ambitious everything-in-one-package format only pleased everyone *some* of the time.

Like *Neverwinter*, *Dragon Age* will also be completely user-modifiable, with tools being included in the game's release – though that'll be a sorrowfully long time from now. A release date and publisher have yet to be set, but we don't expect to see it before Christmas 2005.

SEQUEL ANALYSIS



"No – you put your *left leg* in. The song didn't mention sabres at all."

Prince of Persia 2

What's changing, and why

Feature	Sands of Time	Prince of Persia 2
FIGHTING	It didn't match the beauty of the puzzle elements, and the re-animated sand corpses were often difficult to overcome.	The Prince can fight on the move; there's no stopping to draw his sword. It'll make a huge difference, and should make for acrobatic fighting.
FARAH	Good to have her around when sorting out the puzzles, but a pain during the fighting. When she died, it was restart time.	They've dropped her. The Prince is all about movement and speed; keeping up with him just wasn't on Farah's CV. It's a P45 she needs know.
TONE	A flippancy overcame what should have been a dark quest, saving us from time-sucking deadheads. We demanded darkness!	This time around, he's fighting to avoid his pre-ordained death. The dark tone is undiluted, with decapitations and brutal knifings.
ACROBATICS	*Sands of Time* redefined what a game action hero is. The Prince's wall-running, ledge-grabbing ways made Lara look like a giraffe on ice.	The Prince swings around poles and kicks out at enemies. He combines his wall-running with ropes, and whips around like he's made out of springs.

gobbets

Keyboard capers› The Ergodex DX1 keyboard. This curious USB device consists of a sensor-pad and 25 attachable keys, the idea being that you arrange the keys exactly where you wish on the pad. The price is set at US$150, and it can be ordered at www.ergodex.com. Next: the mouse without a ball: that'll never make it.

Devil's Advocate

Are complex interfaces in games immersive or intrusive?

IAIN McCAFFERTY'S hands are withered claws from years of gaming abuse. He has a faithful hamster called Boo to press keys for him, if games have more than four controls.

What is the most successful game of the last five years? I'm not talking about 'successful' in the sense of pushing back the boundaries of what is possible in a videogame, I'm talking about the title which has put the most bums on seats.

Deus Ex? *Half-Life*?

No, it's *The Sims* – the most fearsomely flogged franchise in the history of videogames. Whether you recognise it as a title of worth or not is irrelevant: the inescapable fact remains that *The Sims* has sold more copies than anything else.

To what should we attribute its success? Aggressive marketing? The expansion pack-extended shelf life? These are mere symptoms, rather than the underlying cause.

What makes *The Sims* so successful is not just the fact that every male plays it to make two women snog each other in front of their boyfriends, but that the interface makes it so darned easy for you to do so.

When you consider all of the phenomenally successful games, what they all have in common is a very simple user interface and the bare minimum of controls. The designers have consciously set out to remove as many barriers as possible from between the player and the game.

You, the so-called 'hardcore gamer', may not care about barriers. In fact, you love them, particularly when dressed up as realistic features. Crouch toggles. Lean controls. Sniper scope wobble. You can't get enough of them. Unfortunately, Joe *Sims*-Buying-Public couldn't give two hoots whether he can lean around corners or not. To him, it's just another control he can't remember.

Deus Ex: Invisible War was pilloried by certain members of the *Deus Ex* hardcore for streamlining its predecessor's interface and control set. No lean functions? MADNESS! Unified ammunition pool? SACRILIGE!

What they forget is that not everyone is willing or able to devote five hours a night to gaming. If videogaming is to grow, it must seek to create as broad an appeal as possible, and court the casual gamer. It will not do this by listening to the hardcore's demands for ever more realistic games with ever more complicated controls and intricate interfaces.

Niche videogames generate niche revenues, and business leaves no room for sentiment or critical acclaim. Developers like Black Isle fold, while EA milk their cash cows dry. The casual gamer wants games they can just sit down and *play* - not games that require you to read the manual for an hour before you can even start. Witness the increasing marginalisation of the adventure and flight sim genres. Thoreau said "Simplify, simplify, simplify!" – advice videogame developers would do well to heed.

Ion Storm's approach to *Invisible War* was the only sensible one in a world where cross-platform, mass-market appeal is necessary for financial viability. Developers need to make their games accessible to as many players as possible; this makes interface streamlining essential.

Games like *Invisible War* represent the way forward. Instead of a world where only a few elite gamers can experience the joys of *Deus Ex*, it is now accessible to the more casual gamer. And before you object, remember this: Westwood listened to their hardcore and gave them what they wanted. *Dune 2000* and *Command & Conquer: Renegade*. Could you live with such atrocities on *your* conscience?

Left. Right. Jump. Do you see?

SPLINTER CELL 3 WILL GRIP US TIGHTLY BECAUSE...
›It looks better than ever, and won't be limited by console versions ›New moves give you more options than ever ›Proper co-op will be dead good fun ›We all love a stealthy kill

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY
Reactive environments reward lateral thinking. *Splinter Cell 3* will move away from the linear to permit a more imaginative approach.

HAPLESS GOON
Or not-so-hapless, in fact. *SC3*'s enemies are a suspicious lot, who'll even investigate extinguished light sources.

SLICK SAM
Mmm. Nice, new, wet-look outfit, Sam. Animation is gorgeous, and he'll even automatically reach for his knife whenever he nears an enemy.

SCOOP!

Sam tries out one of his new moves. Don't try this at home: the office ceiling will never be the same again.

SPLINTER CELL 3

Fisher's the king once again

This year's E3 was the first in a while which really had some console die-hards admitting their jealousy, because the most exciting games of the show – barring only *GTA San Andreas* – were debuting on PC. With the PS2 looking like the last-century technology it is, and Xbox looking almost as creaky, developers chose PCs to showcase their latest and greatest.

The gasps were audible in the darkened theatre as Sam Fisher lurked his way through the several levels we were shown. The quality of animation and graphical effects have reached new heights. The PC version is scheduled for late this year, while the console versions take a back seat and are due early in 2005.

Much of the game will be familiar to fans of the first two *Splinter Cells*. Again, you are stealthy agent Sam Fisher, creeping about killing folk and nicking their secrets. However, what's really got our blood pumping is the promised co-operative multiplayer element, which we saw in action. It's truly co-operative, too: certain new special moves can only be used by two human players in concert, such as boosting over walls and lowering on ropes. You won't simply be two players with the same goals: you'll need to communicate and work together to succeed.

But you bloodthirsty types probably want to know about Sam Fisher's new techniques for ending unworthy life. Well, the PC GAMES ADDICT's favourite is the inverted chokehold: suspended from a ceiling by his legs or feet (or helpful co-player), Sam can now reach down to grab a foe by the throat – just one of a variety of new and updated moves. We're looking forward to a very deadly Christmas.

ROSS ATHERTON

ON THE DISC Movie footage and screenshots await you here > Galleries.

README
Publisher Ubisoft
Developer Ubisoft Montreal
ETA Christmas

I think, therefore I game

The next-gen games that will read your mind

A medical device that reads brainwaves is in development as a games controller and could open up a remarkable new avenue for gaming. The Mind Games Group and MIT Media Lab Europe have developed a skull cap, dubbed Cerebus, that detects electrical activity in the brain and feeds it back to a desktop PC.

The Cerebus cap monitors electrical signals from the scalp, at the back of the head. That area, the occipital lobes, processes the brain's visual activity, and emits readable signals.

Media Labs' have put these signals to very cute in-game use. In *Mind Balance*, the player assists a tightrope-walking monster called Mawg. Mawg attempts to cross the rope and it's up to you to keep his balance. If Mawg slips to the right, the player can shift him back by staring at a flickering orb on the left side of the screen. The flickering prompts a change in brainwave activity that is read by the Cerebus, enabling Mawg to hang on.

But can the Cerebus pioneers move the technology forward? Robert Burke, a Mind Games Associate, explains: "Another technique in development involves the observation of imagined muscle movements. Instead of staring at the blinking orb, you would just imagine moving your left hand and the character would move left. Today we're just taking the Mawg out for a walk; tomorrow we may be making Jedi Mind Tricks a reality."

Media Labs have also developed other games from medical applications. Their first effort, *Relax to Win*, is no ordinary racing game. Each player controls a dragon via biometric finger sensors. The more you relax, as measured by your galvanic skin response, the faster your dragon runs. If you relax enough, he'll fly.

Similarly, *Peace Composed* is a music game that layers instruments according to how relaxed you feel. Unlike the likes of *Call of Duty*, these bio-feedback games focus on calming down – the opposite of gaming as we know it. That's one in the eye for the EyeToy...

README

Publisher Media Labs
Developer Mind Games
ETA N/A

HEADCASE

HEADACHE
We are assured that the device is non-invasive, meaning it won't read your credit card numbers or steal your thoughts.

LOOK HERE
Learning how to use the cap takes less than a minute, and it's perfect for reducing 'hat hair' problems.

BACK OF THE NECK
The skull cap reads electrical activity through the back of the skull. It's nothing new: mothers have had this ability for years.

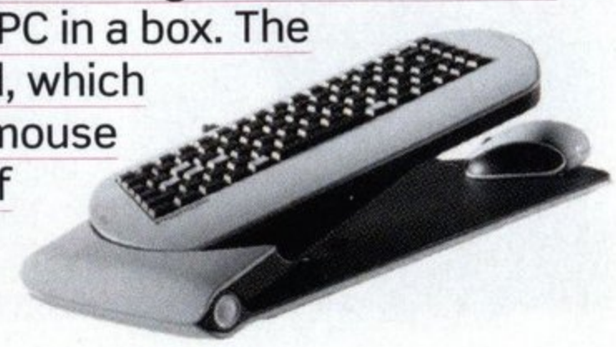
Mawg's a Scottish tightrope-walking behemoth. There can't be many, so take care of him.

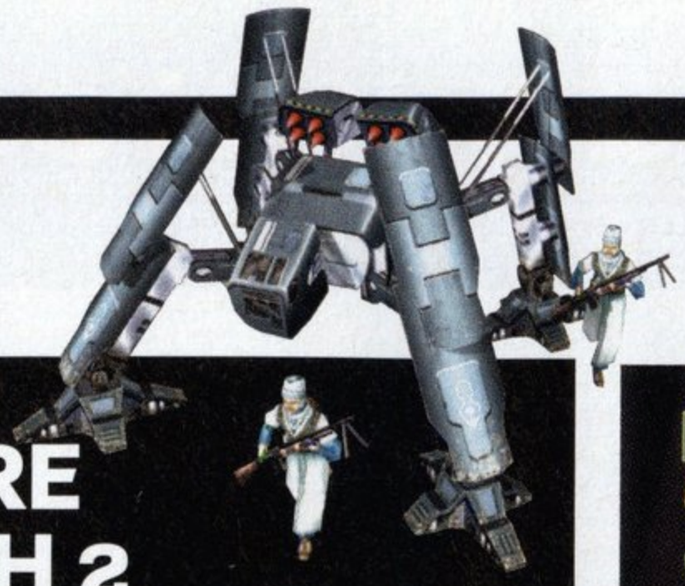
A DIVINE EXPERIENCE

Games based on relaxation techniques already exist. *The Journey to the Wild Divine* is a *Myst*-style adventure that challenges the player to overcome a series of biometric tests, such as controlling their breathing and heart rate. "I've always wanted to experience the amazing things that wizards, sages and mystics experience in movies I've seen, books I've read and dreams I've had," chants Project Designer Cormwin Bell, mystically.

gobbets

Phantom-tastic› Infinium Labs have finally shown off their Phantom games console: the machine that's a PC in a box. The mat sits underneath a hinged keyboard, which raises at one edge so you can slip the mouse about underneath. The system is free if you subscribe to the Phantom Gaming Service, or you can buy it for $199.



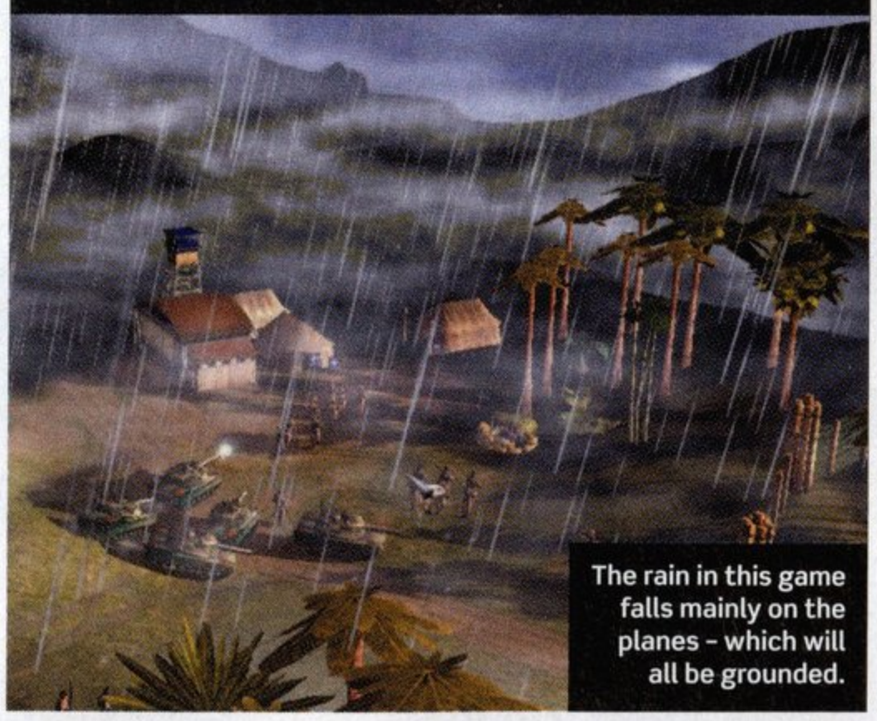


EMPIRE EARTH 2 TOUCHES DOWN

Less fantasy, more reality; that seems to be the drive behind developer Mad Doc's sequel to 2001's Christmas hit, *Empire Earth*. Once again, we're presented with an epoch-spanning RTS that, as the centuries pass by, lets you play with everything from spear-throwing ancients to missile-lobbing mechs. And while there's some wholly speculative technology in the futuristic stages of the game, gone are the days of magic.

Lets you play everything from spear-throwing ancients to missile-lobbing mechs...

The really intriguing aspect of *Empire Earth 2* is the war-planning feature, which enables you to call up a map of the play area and draw attack lines to move your forces. This also works in skirmish games, where you can direct the efforts of AI or human allies. Timing is everything here though, as weather affects your units heavily – thunderstorms will ground planes, sandstorms will blind units and a blizzard will see your army grind to a halt. What good's a tank if it has no windscreen wipers?



The rain in this game falls mainly on the planes – which will all be grounded.

We'd put this in the category of BFG. That's Big Friendly Giant, obviously.

Snowblind

Eidos forget their ski goggles

One to label under 'E3's Pleasant Surprises', Eidos' newbie is a first-person shooter set in a futuristic, hi-tech... Asia. You're an augmented soldier, bio-mechanically upgraded to superhuman levels and sent into the neon-drenched frontlines.

The term 'snowblind' is military jargon for a complete shutdown of all internal electrical and bio-mechanical systems; as a studded-up soldier with a taste for eating kittens, that would be a bad thing. Your augmentations add a lot to the action. You can slow the fighting down and watch everything in slow motion, or you can send out a wave attack that blasts electromagnetic ripples through the enemy, tearing them up like a paper kite in a storm. The more mods your character receives, the more deadly he will become.

There's a squad element in *Snowblind* as well. You need to take good care of your team-mates during the battle, making sure that you heal, cover and rescue them if they happen to get lost in the

thick of the action. With a range of different missions promised, from tactical to all-out attack, and the single player and multiplayer arenas both being served with vehicles, *Snowblind* is shaping up as Eidos' direct competition to the similarly themed squad-shooter *Star Wars: Republic Commando*. The race is on to see which game hits the shelves first.

README

Publisher Eidos
Developer Crystal Dynamics
ETA Spring 2004

GfK THE PC TOP 10 CHART

Or as we call it, the PCGA tribute to the Sims...

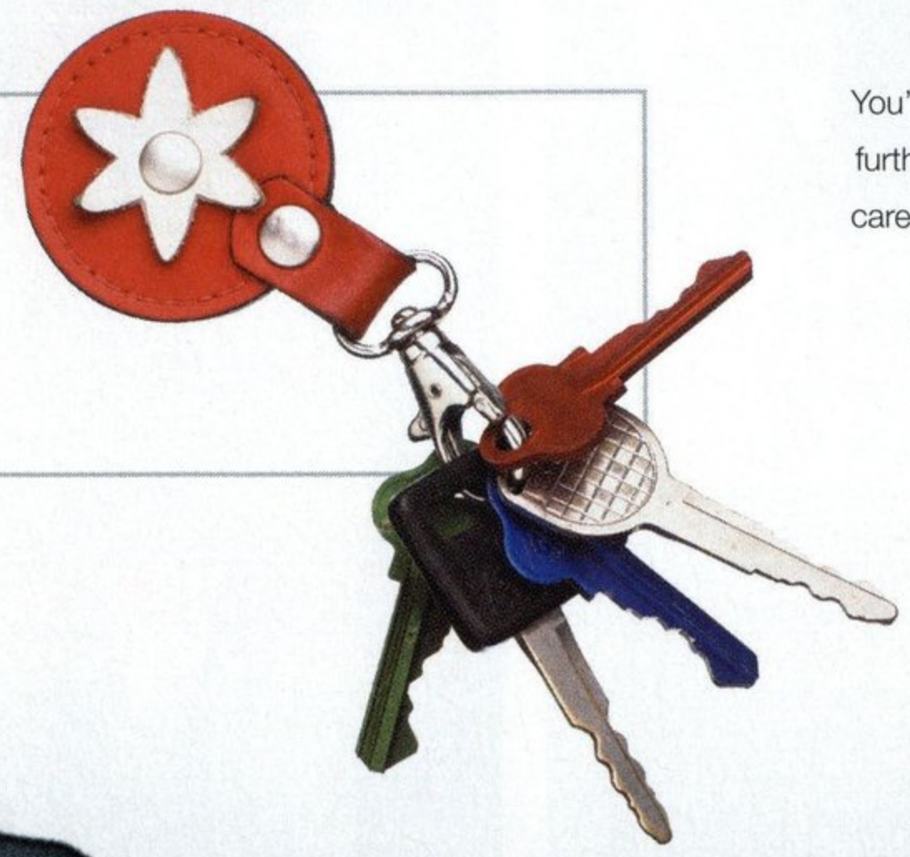
Why are we paying tribute to *the Sims*? Well, we're not really, but we feel that it's important to remind you, the avid gamer, that while it's a good thing to be informed and discerning about your games, you should still have an idea what games actually sell well and bring cash into the industry. Remember, the mainstream may buy some bad games, but they help make the good ones possible too.

We're wondering if they should just rename it to *The Sims: Makin' Money*

POSITION	GAME	PUBLISHER
1 (1)	*The Sims: Deluxe*	EA
2 RE	*Star Wars: Jedi Knight Academy*	Activision
3 RE	*Sim City 3000*	EA
4 NEW	*Haryy Potter: Prisoner of Azkaban*	EA
5 NEW	*Shrek 2: Activity Centre*	Activision
6 (4)	*The Sims: Unleashed*	EA
7 (6)	*The Sims: Superstar*	EA
8 RE	*Neverwinter Nights*	Atari
9 RE	*Civilization 3*	Vivendi
10 (7)	*Counter-Strike: Condition Zero*	Vivendi

And to think your mates get

Just because you join the Army, it doesn't mean your social life has to suffer. Once you've finished for the day, you can catch up with your mates, play some sport, see a film or go home just like anyone else would. You choose what you want to do.



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- *Fitter Armament
- *Plumber
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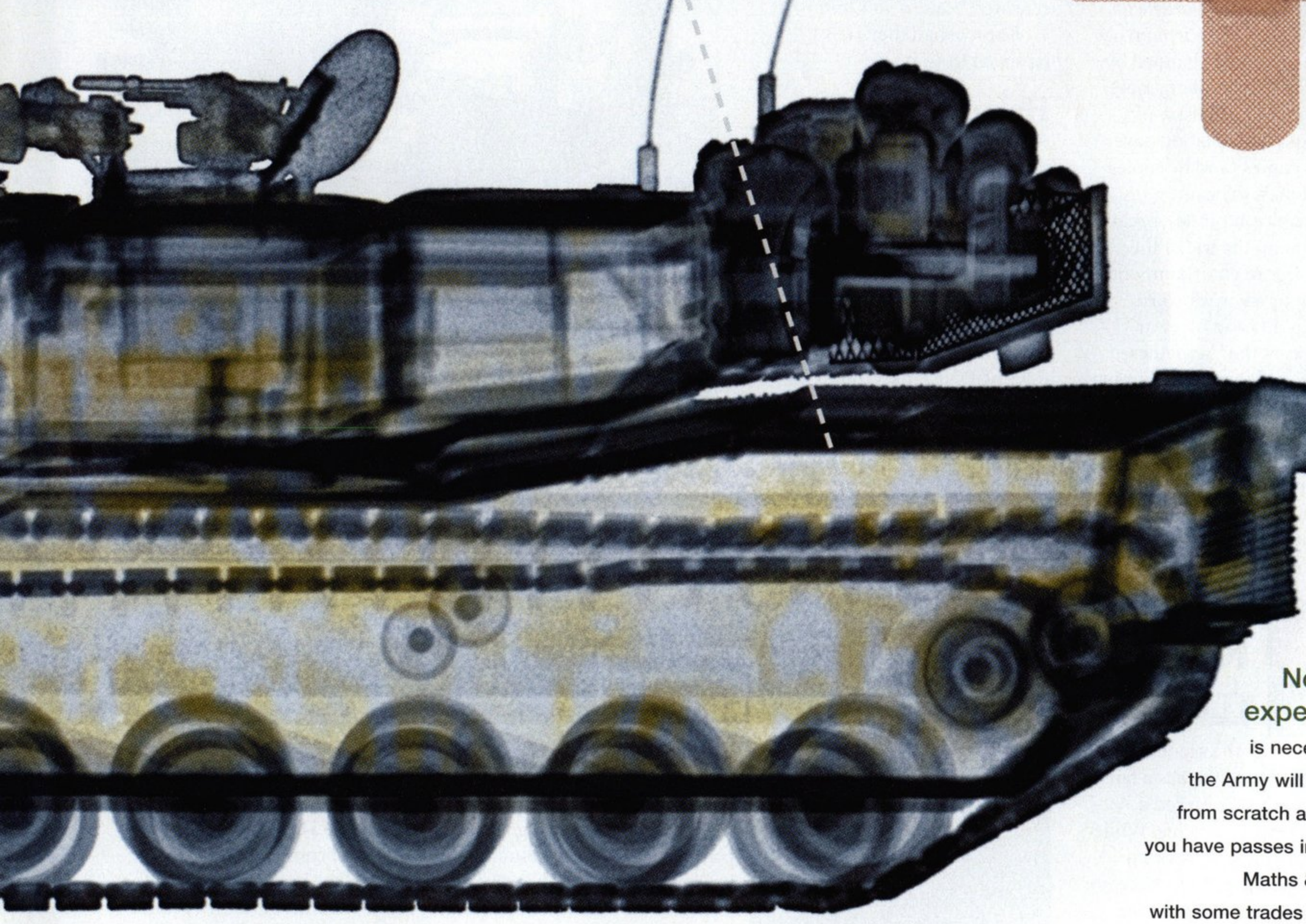

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is necessary as the Army will train you from scratch as long as you have passes in Year 10 Maths & English with some trades requiring Science as well.

No where else will you find the experience and job security that you'll enjoy in the Army.

If you enjoy getting your hands dirty on high performance vehicles, what about working on a 1500bhp gas turbine with computer diagnostics? It's certainly something your mates wouldn't get to do, but it's exactly what you'll be doing working on Abrams Tanks and other specialist vehicles including helicopters and mobile telecommunications systems. Not only that, you'll be getting some of the best apprenticeship training in Australia, as well as building skills highly sought after in the civilian world.

You'll be paid a great wage while you train with a guaranteed job when you finish. You'll start on $23,000p.a. and after 2 years you can earn up to $43,000p.a. and even more as your career progresses.

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This is Hardcore

Voyage to the bottom of the genres

Craig 'Cross-Hairs' Pearson

THIS IS...

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

Battlefield: Vietnam has been banned by the Vietnamese authorities. The Ministry of Culture and Information have seized all copies (and by copies I mean copies: the game's only available on pirate), because they condemn the use of the Vietnam war in entertainment, according to **www.iol.co.za.**

The exploitation of a war that still scars the Vietnamese landscape and people (landmines are being found to this day) is a step too far for the government. It isn't the first time a government has taken action over a war game: in Germany, the symbols of Nazism are banned, and any game carrying the swastika is censored. *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* had the Nazis removed from it.

He's nuked

And while we're here, let's pity poor George Broussard. The co-owner of 3D Realms, developers of the legendary *Duke Nukem Forever*, popped into an online forum and posted this: "When 5,000 people are online we'll release *DNF* stuff." Rather sadly, his post didn't cause a wave of *DNF* fans to flood the Gameshack forum, so the world was left wondering just what 3D Realms were about to release.

Well, parts were wondering; it seems like the rest of the gaming world is rapidly losing interest. Making us laugh and cry many years ago counts for naught in today's gaming world. Come on George, give us some stuff and get us all excited again! Arnie's in office, now. The timing couldn't be more perfect.

Are we all losing interest in war games? Not in these parts.

Ross 'The Beard' Atherton

THIS IS...

RPG/ADVENTURE

Tucked away behind the scenes of what was a fairly quiet E3 for RPGs lurked a couple of potential gems. While Bioware are hard at work on *Dragon Age*, the proper successor to their fantasy RPG heritage (see page 15), they've also licensed their Aurora engine – as used in *Neverwinter Nights* – to Polish developers, CD Projekt. Their title, *The Witcher*, takes its inspiration from the novels of fantasy author Andrzej Sapkowski, and pitches you into the role of a solo monster-hunter, one of a magic-imbued sect of mercenaries knows as Witchers. The game's unique angle, though, is its combat.

Good timing

Instead of simply clicking repeatedly, or only once, to attack an enemy, *The Witcher* requires you to select an attack and then click at just the right moment when the blow (or combo blows)

strikes. Perfect timing results in more damage and, interestingly, more experience points. Bad news for folks with no rhythm though! If this doesn't secure a publisher, I'll be irritated. **www.thewitcher.com** should be online by the time you read this.

Meanwhile, foolishly named *The Bloody Magic* (**www.bloodmagicthegame.com**)has been renamed to simply *Blood Magic*. This lushly designed fantasy RPG offers multitudinous magic types and special abilities, which you're able to combine to form ultra-powerful attacks. HD Interactive have their wands at the ready for a release later this calendar year.

Mark 'Mumbles' Sutherns

THIS IS...

ONLINE

There may have been few new MMORPG game announcements in recent times, but there have been plenty of tasty flesh added to bones.

The most interesting noises emanated from Sigil Studios. They revealed that they'd be employing the *Unreal* engine for *Vanguard: Saga of Heroes*, and the game will be put together using Microsoft's own XNA technology. This means that Sigil will not only be geared up for an Xbox version, but we'll also get to enjoy the first MMORPG with a bundled chat facility. The idea of Vanguard's airwaves being littered with 133t speak sends shivers down my spine, but Sigil are assuring us that the chat facility will be configurable by groups and clans.

Vanguard is on its way with bells and whistles.

Harking back

A most compelling sight from Valve has been a glimpse of the new *Counter-Strike* (See Most Wanted page 8). The Aztec map was impressive, but I can't help wonder if the *CS* gaming community are *that* excited about it. Support for *Condition Zero* from online gamers is lukewarm, with hardened *CS* players petitioning for a 'Pro-Version' of the mod, even constructing mods that hark back to previous beta versions (**www.cs13mod.com**).

Right now, Australian and Kiwi cyberathletes are stretching sinews at the WCG 2004 preliminaries. The best from around the land will assemble at the Sydney Superdome for the finals on September 18, 2004. Our finest will then jet off to San Francisco for the Grand Finals, starting October 10, 2004.

Mark 'Despot' Donald

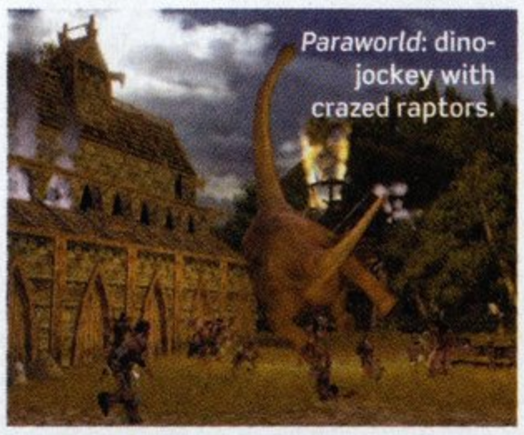
THIS IS...

STRATEGY/MANAGEMENT

Of all the new teaser announcements we get this time of year, the most intruiging of late has been *Paraworld* from German developers SEK. This curious RTS focuses on the development of prehistoric settlements, in an age when bronto-steaks are haute cuisine, and the environmental stressors have more teeth than synapses. The focus is on developing heroes, *War III* style, but don't expect to see it this year.

Lucky for some

Shots were also released for *XIII Century: Sword & Honour*. This Middle Ages RTS, brainchild of One Small World, drops you into 13th Century politics, and asks you to raise armies and fight your way out. With *Battle for Middle-Earth* and, of course, *Rome: Total War* marching in column to the tail-end of 2004, this is very much the year of The Great Big RTS.



Paraworld: dino-jockey with crazed raptors.

Populous: The Beginning may be a bit long in the tooth, but there's a thriving community at work on its primal code. Check out the Populous: Reincarnation project at **http://strategyplanet.com/populous** for instructions on running the mods, as well as the latest incarnation: *Oil Worlds*.

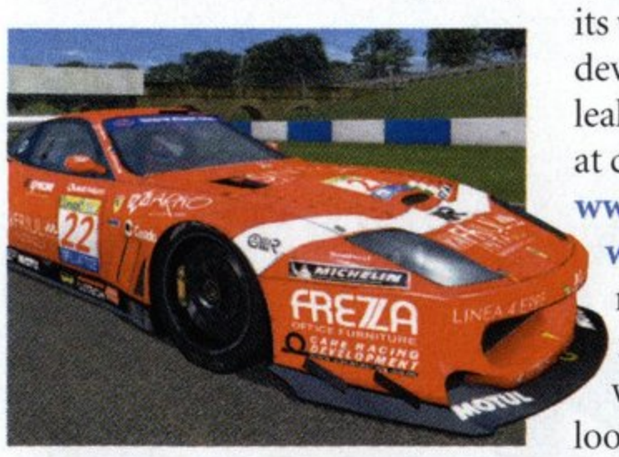
Finally, give your turn-based tactical ligaments a workout at **www.warfarehq.com**. They organise tournaments using numerous games, including the *Combat Mission* and *Decisive Action* series. We're just wondering exactly how long a turn-based strategy tournament takes to complete…

THIS IS...

SIMULATION

Tim 'The Baron' Stone

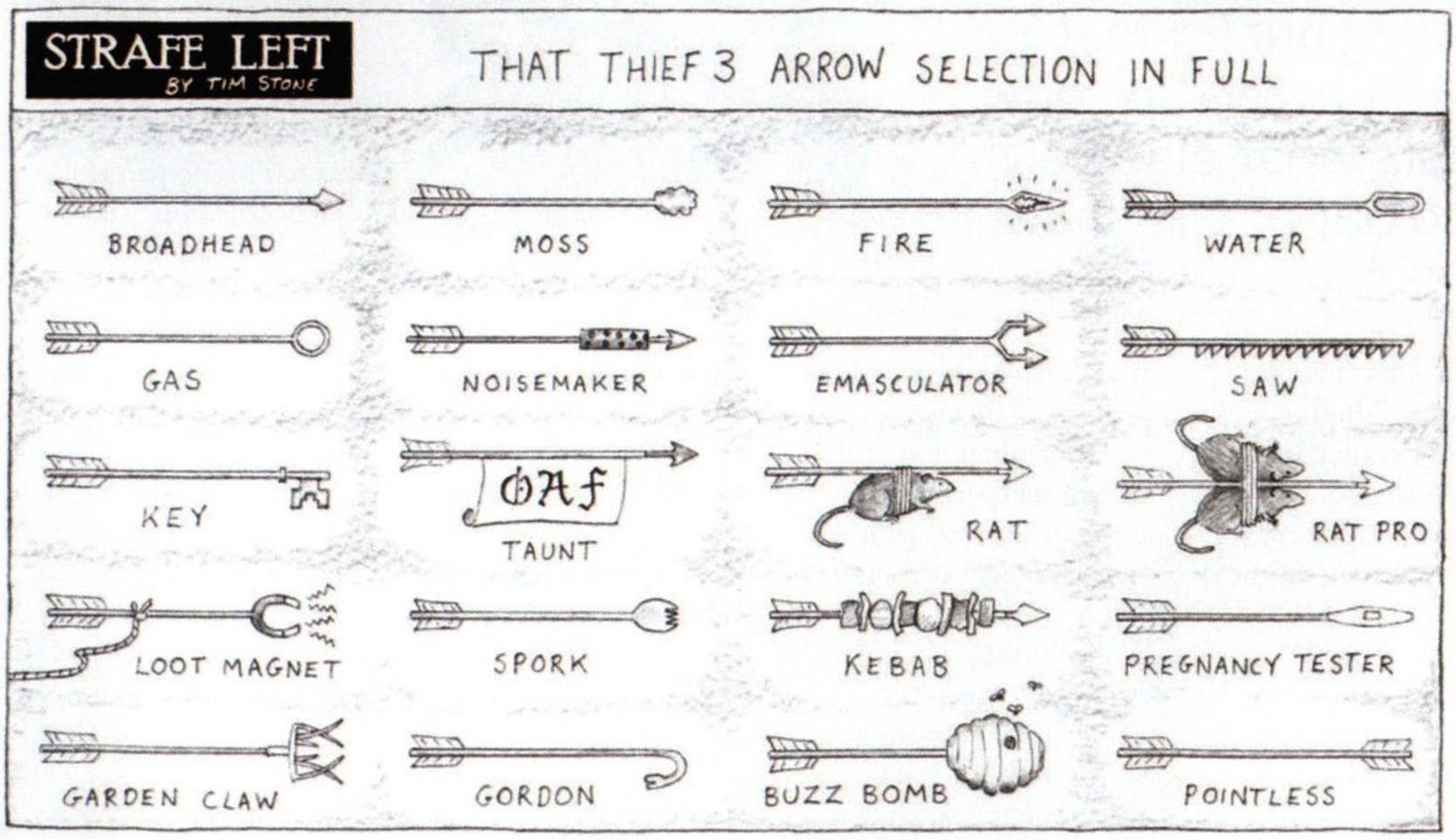
What the Good Lord of Simulation taketh with one hand, he often giveth back with the other. This month came the depressing dissolution of Papyrus (makers of *Grand Prix Legends*, and the pre-EA *NASCAR* games) and the canning of *Microsoft Train Simulator 2*; then the giving of an unexpected GTR test-drive and news of two new rail sims rising from the ashes of *MSTS2*.



Eyes were still dewy from the announcement of Papyrus's passing, when rumours began to circulate that a press demo of SimBin's upcoming supercar spectacular, *GTR*, had found its way to the net. Wisely, the developers legitimised the leak, approving downloads at community sites like **www.bhmotorsports.com** and **www.racesimcentral.com**. So nobody had to miss out on a rough-edged, yet reassuringly wonderful appetiser for what is looking like a strong contender for motorsport sim of the year. We included the demo on last issue's cover discs.

Training

Meanwhile, head over to **www.raildriver.com** and **www.trainartisan.com** for interesting reading on the temporarily titled TrainMaster Train Simulator and Train Artisan Train Simulator. We can expect Virtual cab technology, realistic physics modelling, a friendly route editor developed by TA for *MSTS2* and crucial compatibility with *MSTS* add-ons.



Tim 'Dancemat' Edwards

THIS IS...

ODDBALL

It's taken as read that playing games makes you feel good. At times (usually approaching 4am), terribly good. But the Make a Wish foundation, the same charity that pairs sick children with their sporting idols, has taken that philosophy one step further, by drafting in a LucasArts employee to build a personalised shoot-'em-up for a nine-year-old boy suffering from leukaemia.

In *Ben's Game*, you play as Ben Duskin, hover-skating above a cellular lattice. How the game plays is informed by Ben's own knowledge of leukaemia: the objective is to wipe the area clean of mutated cells by defeating seven bosses, gaining a shield from chemotherapy side-effects along the way.

Malignant dot eaters

The idea for the game came about early in Ben's treatment, when his doctor, Dr Seymour Zoger of the UCSF Children's Hospital, asked Ben to visualise his body fighting the leukaemia. He imagined Pac-Man, eating away at the cancerous cells in his body. For his 'wish', courtesy of the Make a Wish foundation, Ben asked for a game to be created to help other patients at the Hospital take their mind off the pain of treatment – it can be downloaded at **www.makeawish.org/ben.**

Ben's Game was developed by Eric Johnston, a Senior Software Engineer at LucasArts, and it will now be installed on PCs at the UCSF Children's Hospital. Happily, Ben is now in remission and feeling healthy. Aww. Don't stories like this make you feel all squishy inside?

Could make for a fantastic excuse for kids to tell their folks they need to game when sick.

Illustrations by David Lyttleton

PSSST! It's...

The Spy

With James Cottee handling our E3 feature last issue, the Spy now reveals what else he found out at the show...

Wish to contact The Spy? You cannot. The Spy contacts you.

You can't make an omelette without breaking a few heads. That, at least, appears to be agent 47's philosophy, judging by the way he stalked me around the LA convention centre at E3 shortly after I left Io Interactive's stand. Even under an angle-poise grilling, Io refused to reveal any information on **Hitman 4**. However, my sources soon alerted me to the fact that Io have registered the domain name www.hitmanbloodmoney.com. And yes, I gave 47 the slip – at SinSoft Interactive's belly-dancing cabaret stand. Take a tip from the master, chrome dome.

Funcom are keeping similarly schtumm regarding their future releases. All I've ferreted out thus far is that they have two MMOGs in the pipeline: one a massive licence, the other involving vampires, and both using the **Dreamfall** engine. Given their success with **Anarchy Online**, could this big licence fall into the science fiction category? And if so, what could it be? Given Funcom's recently acquired 'equity investment' of 4.5 million Euros ($9m) from Nordic venture capitalists Northzone, we'd say they could afford something big. Franks Herbert's Dune, perhaps? The Spy is keen to know.

From my secure vantage point at the Microsoft stand, inside a hollowed-out Xbox, I overheard fearful mutterings about the threat of Linux. There was talk of changing the PC-CD ROM logo on game boxes to the Windows badge. Sounds to The Spy like a passive-aggressive way of saying "this software doesn't work with Linux". On the positive side, their 'next gen' fantasy MMOG, **Vanguard**, is looking very tasty indeed, especially with the range of tradeskills available. Master carpenters can actually build galleons, for example. It'll also be Xbox 2 compatible, which could mean staggering numbers of players. Intriguing.

At the other end of the corporate spectrum are Bioware. Fiercely proud of their independence, they refuse to be 'owned' by any publisher. Their new RPG is **Dragon Age** which, they're proud to say, doesn't use the D&D D20 system. Which of course means they don't have to licence it from Wizards of the Coast, who own the system. They'll be developing their own from scratch, and if it's competitive enough, they may even consider creating their own pen-and-paper RPGs.

Rather more secretive about his projects is Will Wright, of **SimCity** fame. He's been busy for two years on his latest game, but still won't reveal the nature of his work. When The Spy quizzed him about whether he'd ever consider revisiting the virtual metropolis, he refused to comment. If there's one thing I've learned in this game, it's that people don't stay quiet unless they've something to hide...

And finally, the spy has to wonder how long the intense gaming pleasure of **Doom 3** will actually last. One of my industry ferrets was recently invited to id to play through the game. When he asked id how long he'd be there, he was told they'd be done by lunchtime. Make of that what you will.

Spy out.

fun,
anyone?
PlayStation.2

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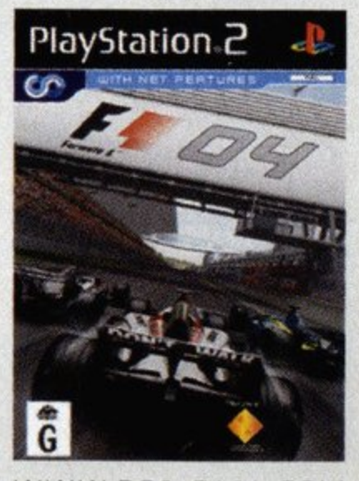


WWW.PS2-F104.COM

Eyewitness Investigation

BEGGAR'S CANYON: WHY GALAXIES IS IN RECESSION

Special Report

We investigate the *Star Wars* slump – a virtual world in crisis

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, Thix, a Mon Calamari Master Architect, couldn't afford his mortgage. He wasn't the only one: characters of every species were suffering. Harvesters were running empty, their owners unable to pay the upkeep costs. "At one point I could afford to run my heavy harvesters and a large house without any problem," he says. "I knew I could top two million credits a week. Now I'm struggling to make 200,000."

As the Clinton-Gore campaign slogan of '92 put it, "It's the Economy, stupid." Commerce plays a vital role in *Galaxies*. For some players, it's vital. They need supplies and these have to be paid for. For others, like Thix, building starter-homes for *Galaxies*' middle classes, it's everything. If his customers can't afford his produce, Thix will face ruin.

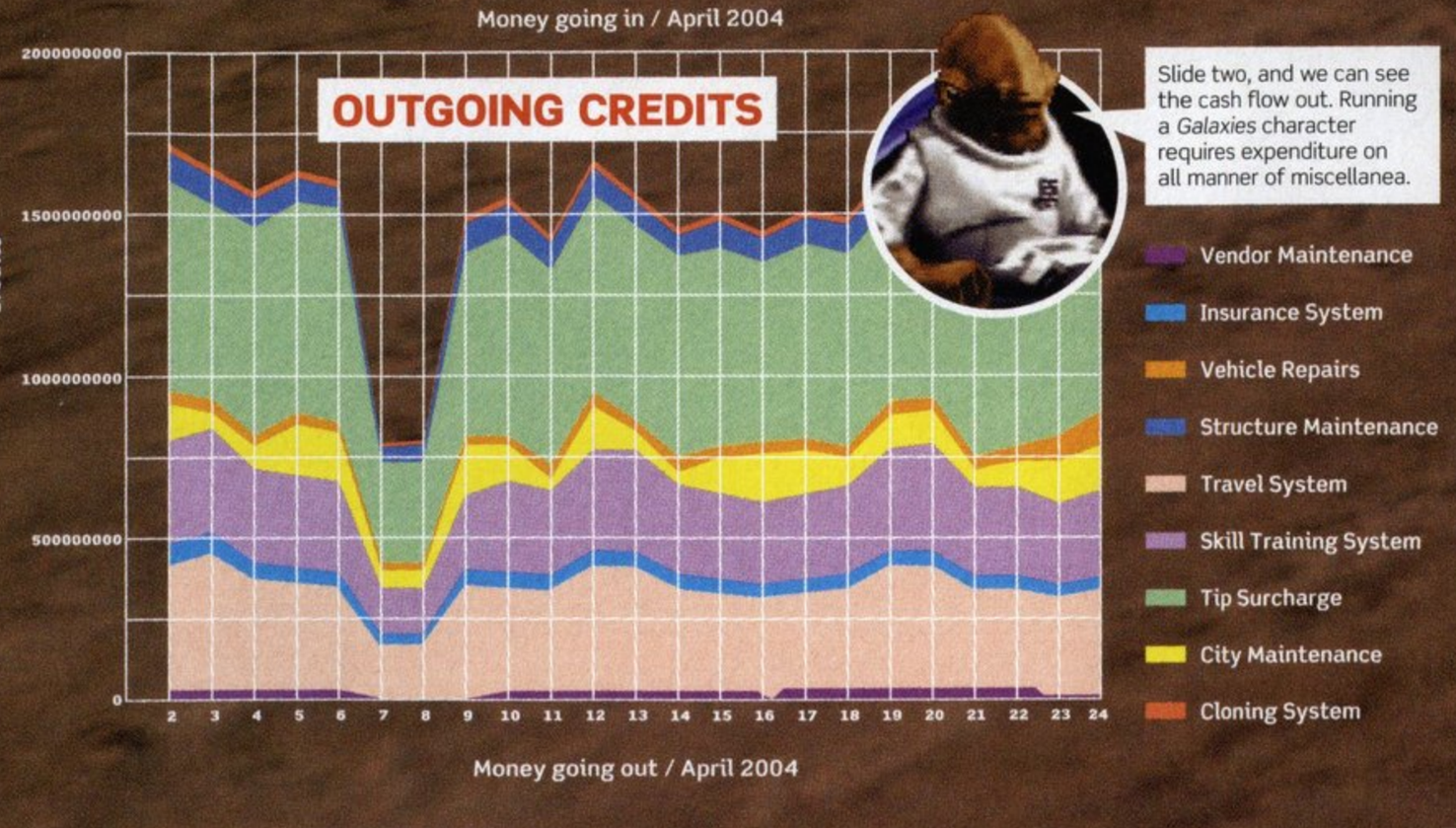
Edward Castronova is widely recognised as the leading authority on virtual economies. He believes they share similarities to real-world economies. "They still involve specialisation, trade and opportunity cost. *Galaxies* has one of the best economies out there, but there's still much to learn."

He believes the genre should move towards mirroring a free market. "I'd close the mission system. If you want to make money, you have to offer services that other players want. Only the government should control the money supply. Letting every player have coin-minting powers, the universal practice in MMORPGs, is a recipe for trouble."

But according to Raph Koster, *Star Wars Galaxies* Creative Director, that's opposed to how games function. "Folks don't work for fun – and bankruptcy isn't fun for most people. So if you want to avoid the un-fun bits of a real economy, you have a bit of work to do. Take the expectation of profit. If a player sinks a bunch of time into an MMO, they expect to get something for it – but a real economy doesn't guarantee that. You might make a product nobody wants and lose your shirt. Well, in a game, users are expecting profit."

Galaxies has a 'faucet/drain economy'. Imagine

Ahem. Quieten down at the back, we have some serious work to do here. Slide one shows the cash flow into the *Galaxies* universe. Notice that it mirrors the cash out of the game. However, the amount of currency leaving the game is almost 33% greater than that created. By far the largest source of credits is the mission system.



Slide two, and we can see the cash flow out. Running a *Galaxies* character requires expenditure on all manner of miscellanea.

the game as a bath: at one end, a bank of taps distributing credits, loot and mission rewards; at the other a drain, where currency is siphoned off. The designers of *Galaxies* have provided many ways to spend your cash, but there's a problem. According to figures released by Koster, the game's losing more money than it's actually creating: by 150 million credits a fortnight.

Could *Galaxies* run out of money? Actually, no. This is a blip, a corrective phase in *Galaxies'* history. The problem stems from a small group of dishonest currency traders within the game. They'd found a way to create counterfeit currency out of thin air. They were getting rich by exploiting a minor bug, spending their gains on powerful items, weapons and armour, or simply auctioning the proceeds on eBay. It was causing havoc: pricing honest players out of the market. Some profited. Most went poor.

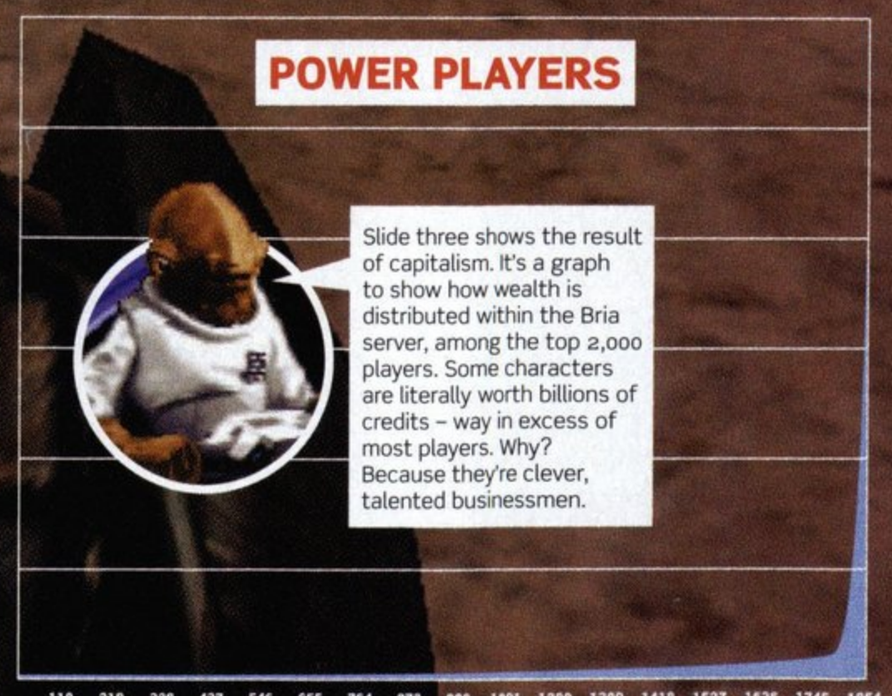
By examining the server logs and outputs, the *Galaxies* team stopped the flow of fake cash and removed trillions of credits from circulation. Knock-on effects were felt: the enormous pressure that had been sustaining *Galaxies'* financial system for weeks was removed.

To top it all, the development team had triggered a further slump, by announcing that the 'holocron' system, the only path to Jedi status, was to be abandoned. Holocrons had encouraged a new social class, the 'holo-grinders', who worked to master every type of career in the hope of opening their force-sensitive slot. They'd purchase stockpiles of resources, used to train up their characters. With a new Jedi system imminent, those players just stopped what they were doing, leaving suppliers like Thix high and dry and causing a server-wide depression.

The bubble has burst. Thankfully for Thix, the commissions are coming back in, and there's a contract for a new Guild Hall on Corellia.

"I've realised that, if you're going to run a virtual business, it's not always a boom period, and you need to plan ahead for the slumps," warns Thix. "Many of my peers have spent recklessly on valuable trinkets or huge resource stockpiles that they can no longer turn into saleable goods. Some have simply sold on their resources, closed up shop and moved on."

POWER PLAYERS


Slide three shows the result of capitalism. It's a graph to show how wealth is distributed within the Bria server, among the top 2,000 players. Some characters are literally worth billions of credits – way in excess of most players. Why? Because they're clever, talented businessmen.
110 219 328 437 546 655 764 873 982 1091 1200 1309 1418 1527 1636 1745 1854

Top 2000 Players on the Bria Server

README

Publisher Activision (US)
Developer SOE
Website www.station.sony.com

FACE FORWARD
Between missions, you'll have a chance to chat to your lackies. Gearbox are promising to draft in Hollywood talent to provide likenesses and voices for the other soldiers. According to Randy, "The ink isn't quite dry on the contract." That's Hollywood for: "The stars are holding out for a bigger rider."

DIS-CHARGE
This is all wrong. Do you see the problem? The troops are charging out from cover without considering all the options. That's left them exposed from two sides. The commander needs to head back to West Point for further training.

Men in dire straits

RELEASE DECEMBER

Brothers In Arms

The attack starts with a mortar round landing not ten metres away. Your commanding officer is finally roused to a decision. "Sergeant, gather your squad and clear that street. Now."

Randy Pitchford, Gearbox's President and Chief of Staff is demonstrating *Brothers in Arms*, their bayonet-stab at first-person WWII combat. It's a phenomenal prospect: rather than funnelling you, alone, through a series of scripted encounters, you're put in command of a platoon of paratroopers, dropped into Normandy at midnight, D-Day. You're responsible for directing them, using authentic US small-scale military tactics to manoeuvre and fire.

THE PITCH
Think Band of Brothers meets *Hidden & Dangerous*. With a pinch of *Call of Duty* explosive salt.

You have two fire-teams: one specialising in getting in close, flanking the enemy, the other laying down a base of fire. As General Patton put it, "Grab 'em by the nose and kick 'em in the ass."

Your men work together independently of your instructions, covering each other's advance, firing from behind cover, even raising their rifles when a friendly crosses their path.

A small patrol of German soldiers is blocking the advance. Randy orders his fire squad to set up at one corner, peppering the enemy position from a distance. Now the clever bit. Rather than ordering a suicidal charge into automatic guns, Randy wheels left, attempting to outflank. His tactical decisions are aided by a 'situational awareness view'. This top-down map replicates the months of pouring over maps and models of Normandy that paratroopers undertook before D-Day. When they're ready, Randy motions for the rest of the squad to cross the road. Once they're in position, they inch out, peppering the Germans from a corner.

ON THE DISCS Take a closer look at *Brothers In Arms* by checking out the video > Movies.

The sausage-eaters are left high and dry, their position covered from all angles and the bullets streaming in. "Look at them," cries Randy. "They're s[*litting* – ed] themselves!"

Randy takes the opportunity to move to a firing position. Two shots later and the brief engagement is over. The German defenders are face down and dead. The platoon moves on.

TIM EDWARDS

README
Publisher Ubisoft
Developer Gearbox Software
Link www.brothersinarmsgame.com
Small-scale infantry warfare rarely looks, or feels, this intense. Don't fear the draft.

FAR FROM HOME

Gearbox are basing their locations on period maps and photographs from the US Army Signal Corps. Their plan is, if you see it in the game, it would have existed in Normandy at the time of the landings. And we'll be checking. Granted, it's an ambitious proposition, but it demonstrates the power of games as documentary mechanisms. "It would cost Spielberg millions to actually recreate the battlefields of Normandy," explains Randy. "It's much easier for us. In fact, it becomes a case of, 'Why aren't we doing it right?' If it isn't realistic, then it becomes a lesser game."

WAR IS ALL AROUND

One squad can't win an entire war, no matter how capable its commander. As you go about your mission, you'll notice other groups working on their own objectives, using the same tactics and principles.

JUST ANOTHER SOLDIER

Brothers in Arms takes place from the 5th of June to the 13th. You play as Sergeant Matt Baker, a pseudonym for a real soldier who parachuted into Normandy as part of the 502nd Infantry Regiment. Your campaign objective is to capture and hold Carentan, the vital town that linked the Utah and Omaha Beach causeways.

The space-based action in *Nexus* is jaw-droppingly gorgeous. It's enough to make us sit with baited breath until its September release day. Or at least book a week's holiday in preparation...

Mithis calls the game a "tactical fleet simulator". Don't listen – it's cooler than that.

Stop admiring the view – whip your aliens into shape and kick some Vargrad ass. If they have one.

Prepare boarding parties

Nexus

RELEASE SEPTEMBER

The Jupiter Incident

We typically attempt aloofness amid the din and thrill of E3's circus of bedlam. While the Americans whoop and holler immodestly, we might go so far as pursed lips or even a raised eyebrow. How embarrassing, then, that *Nexus* managed to elicit a full-blooded blasphemy from this usually reserved roving reporter.

THE PITCH
A prettier *Homeworld* without the boring resource management. And giant space monsters!

Even on a small screen this game is an arresting experience. If *Nexus* has a serious problem, though, it's that the developers Mithis are touting it as a "tactical fleet simulator". This phrase does little justice to a game with more action than seems likely, and visuals that speak (loud and clear) for themselves.

Comparisons to *Homeworld* and *Haegemonia* are inevitable and inaccurate. Yes, we are floating in space (ladies and gentlemen) and yes, you control a force of spaceships. But there the similarities end, as *Nexus* has entirely excised the need to collect resources, plot economic strategies and drag yourself away from the serious business of turning your foes into so much space-dust.

Before we go into more detail, though, time for a history lesson: *Nexus* is more than it seems.

Starting out in life as *Imperium Galactica III* under the aegis of Philos Labs and CDV (although the *IG* series began with the equally Hungarian outfit Digital Reality, who later hit back with *Haegemonia*), it was later renamed *Galaxy Andromeda* and development shifted to Mithis – an outfit formed by former members of Philos. However, as part of CDV's 'restructuring' last winter, the game was ditched – but only in that CDV withdrew their funding. Mithis soldiered on, implemented a new engine and recruited a new publisher in friendly Dutch types, HD Interactive. These tough times have resulted in a game with few rough edges and a real polish.

Significantly, the complex management element which the game had in its original form has been cut away, leaving the more immediate elements of tactical strategy. And lasers. As a bold space captain, you command a mercenary capital ship, employed by a bunch of friendly (if somewhat battle-shy) aliens. Your enemy, though, is more sinister. These aliens, the Vardrag, accidentally created a rogue Artificial Intelligence which, in fine Terminator style, became self-aware and escaped to hyperspace. From there it's now able to infect any technological system, and send its constructs into real space to fight against your more conventional forces.

Capital ship-sized creatures float in space

The storyline progresses over 25 missions, and at the outset you'll be in charge of just one capital ship – like *Homeworld*, these larger vessels can hold squadrons of smaller fighters and bombers. You can set capital ships' sub-systems to respond intelligently to attacks, or you can manually control power, shields and individual turrets yourself should you wish. Towards the end of the game, the forces under your control will grow, with up to ten major ships and up to 40 in all. All the ships are pretty, but the most awe-inspiring are the capital ship-sized alien creatures that float through space, dispatching their own fighter-type creatures to do their bidding. Their bizarre design and astonishing animations have to be seen to be believed; as such we're hoping we'll get to control these behemoths too. The game's September release can't come soon enough.

ROSS ATHERTON

README

Publisher HD Interactive
Developer Mithis
Link www.nexusthegame.com
The action is stunning, and the slimmed-down strategy element works well. Engage!

The future is going to be more than just real

Unreal 3.0

RELEASE 2006

MESHED POTATO Creating characters is a two-stage process. First, a hugely detailed sample is built, with the desired bumps and ridges. Next, the skin of that model is melted down and applied to a standard, low-fidelity model, in the form of a bump map.

SLIDESHOW SIDESHOW The PC hardware upgrade grind continues. Epic are aiming for DirectX9 hardware, ie, the current generation of graphics cards, to be the minimum system requirement for the first *Unreal* Engine 3.0 games, to be released in 2006. Also expect a monstrous leap in hard-drive storage space requirements.

HE'S A MODEL Underneath this critter's oily hide, you'll find 200 'bones', providing support for physics-based animations. *Unreal 3* models will include fully articulated faces, hands and arms. And the occasional nasal hair problem.

THE PITCH
The prettiest, gnarliest, drooliest monsters in the world. Like *Unreal 2*, but better.

Ever fancied producing gaming masterpieces? If so, you'll be in the market for a game engine: the underlying software that brings developers' design ideas to life on the screen. For your consideration, we present *Unreal* Engine 3.0. It's the latest version of the development platform most favoured by PC developers. And it's crucially important for all gamers. New technology equals new possibilities, and these screens offer the first clue about the quality and direction of the next generation of PC games.

It's already clear that those games are going to be beautiful beyond belief. The new *Unreal* technology has been written from the ground up to take advantage of the latest DirectX9 video cards as a base standard. Inside: beautifully coloured soft shadows and lighting, and highly detailed structures. Outside: vast, expansive landscapes. Enormous textures and intricately detailed geometry (see Meshed Potato) combine to create a staggeringly lush simulated world. In a demonstration of the code at this year's Game Developers Conference, Epic showed the creature you see above walking in front of a stained-glass window, the coloured light falling onto its uneven skin.

> Walking in front of a stained-glass window

Epic are including enhanced skeletal animation, full Dolby Digital certified 5.1 surround sound, and an improved physics engine which finally takes friction into account. There's also code included to encourage cross-platform networking: expect to bump heads with Xbox2 and PS3 players forthwith.

All we're missing is a game. Homebrew coders wishing to fill that gap beware: rumour has it that the engine licence could cost a cool million bucks. It might be less painful to simply hold out for *Unreal Warfare* like the rest of us.

TIM EDWARDS

ON THE DISCS More *Unreal* 3.0 loveliness in the form of these and other images > Galleries.

README

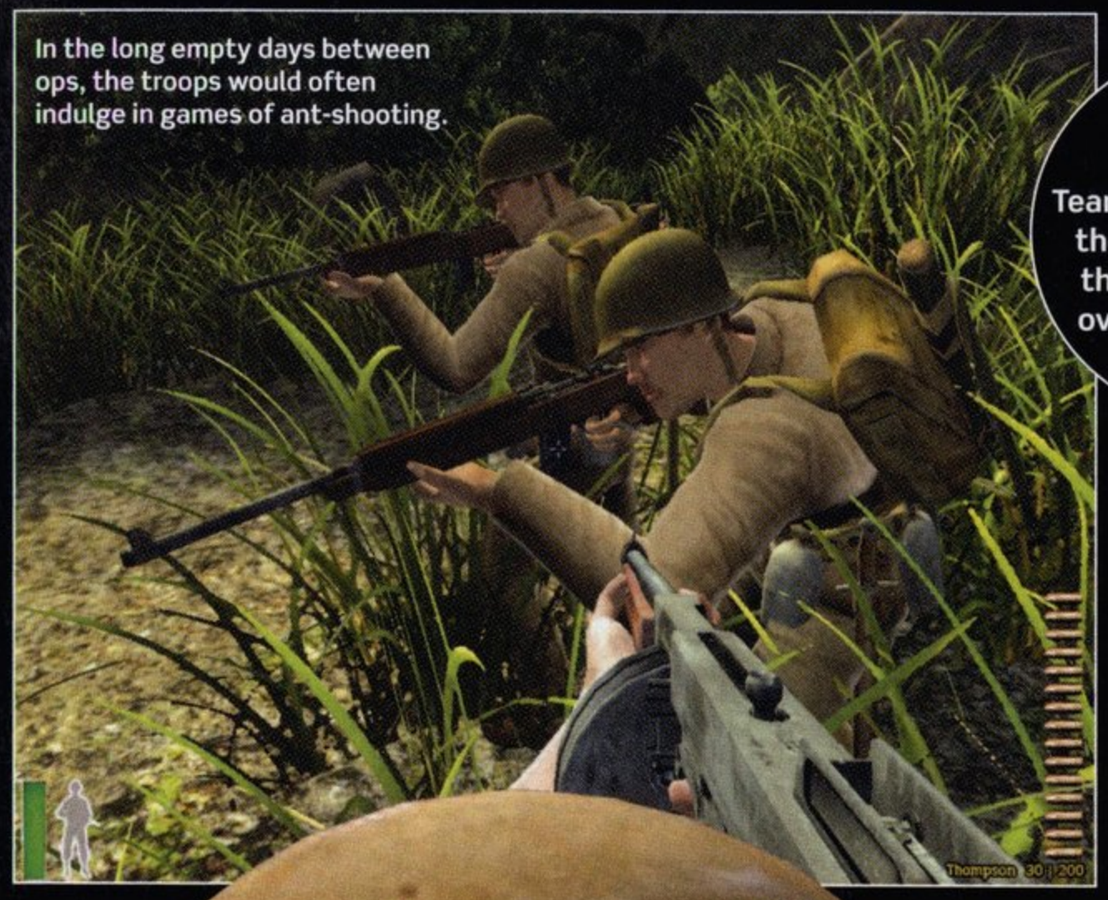
Publisher Lots
Developer Epic
Link www.unrealtechnology.com
The future of PC gaming is bright. It looks soft, textured and full of coloured lights.

"And if it hadn't been for you medalling kids..."

Medal of Honour

Pacific Assault

RELEASE SEPTEMBER



THE PITCH

Team-based rumbles in the jungle, but with the emphasis on AI over *CoD*'s scripted action.

Let's say it now and get it out of the way: *Call of Duty* genuinely, as American developers are so fond of saying, Raised The Bar. *Medal of Honour*, from which the development team of *CoD* sprang, has to seriously go some to match the scripted shooter. What's immediately apparent is that EA aren't going to try.

They're doing something subtly different.

Rather than choreographed scenes, they're relying on AI to lead to the memorable moments. The whole campaign has been constructed around a tight fire-team that follows you through the entire game.

While your team includes heavy weapon troopers and engineers, it's the medic who changes the dynamic most. Rather than relying on picking up water-bottles to boost health, you rely on him. This relationship is never more stressed than when you take a bullet that puts you down.

> What they're doing is subtly different

The screen whites out as you collapse, and you start getting auditory flashbacks to moments earlier in your campaign... however, if you protected your medic, he may be able to reach you in time and bring you back.

The multiplayer game is also being lavished with attention previously denied this series. There are eight unique maps, mainly for the Invader mission mode where offensive and defensive teams fight to achieve objectives. Intriguingly, the Havok physics are integral to the multiplayer game: the developers suggest that rolling barrels could be used as cover for an advance. It's good to see that by exploring a new front in WWII, EA are endeavouring to open a new front in the development of the genre, too. Let's face it, it's not like we need another WWII game that works to the formula.

KIERON GILLEN

README

Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer In-house
Link www.eagames.com
Scripted shooter returns. Adds non-scripting. And the Japanese. It can only be a good thing.

The Longest Journey wakes up

Dreamfall

RELEASE OCT 2005

Five years ago, *The Longest Journey* went horribly unnoticed by the gaming public. It was a story that deserved the word 'epic', told through a beautifully painted point and click adventure, and infamously written for an adult-thinking audience. Finishing *The Longest Journey* was like turning the final page of a wonderful book – that ache as you realise there are no more pages, the desperate desire to cling to that last paragraph, just so it won't end. But with *TLJ*, *you* made a difference to that tale.

And as with any great story, so much was left untold. Funcom's director Ragnar Tørnquist has since been inundated by fans demanding to learn more about lead character April Ryan, and to spend more time in the twin worlds of Stark and Arcadia. Our first look at the sequel, *Dreamfall*, suggests that sometimes, pestering works.

As a race, we fear change, but we're going to have to be brave. *Dreamfall* is categorised as an 'action/adventure', which is going to have the diehards worried. But rest assured, this isn't April Ryan exploring tombs... this isn't even April Ryan at all. Living in astonishingly beautiful 3D locations, *Dreamfall*'s lead character is Zoë Castillo, a 19-year-old finding herself mixed up in a bizarre conspiracy involving her dreams.

But let's put minds to rest: the 'action' epithet isn't a sop to today's tiresome fear of traditional adventure. It's an attempt to move things a giant leap forwards. "Our main goal is to give the player the freedom and the power to interact with the world in lots of different ways," says Tørnquist. "You'll be able to walk anywhere, pick up and move objects around, examine the environment, talk to people, fight, sneak, climb, jump. A 3D world allows us to expand the range of interactions far beyond what's typically done in these sorts of games."

Written for an adult-thinking audience

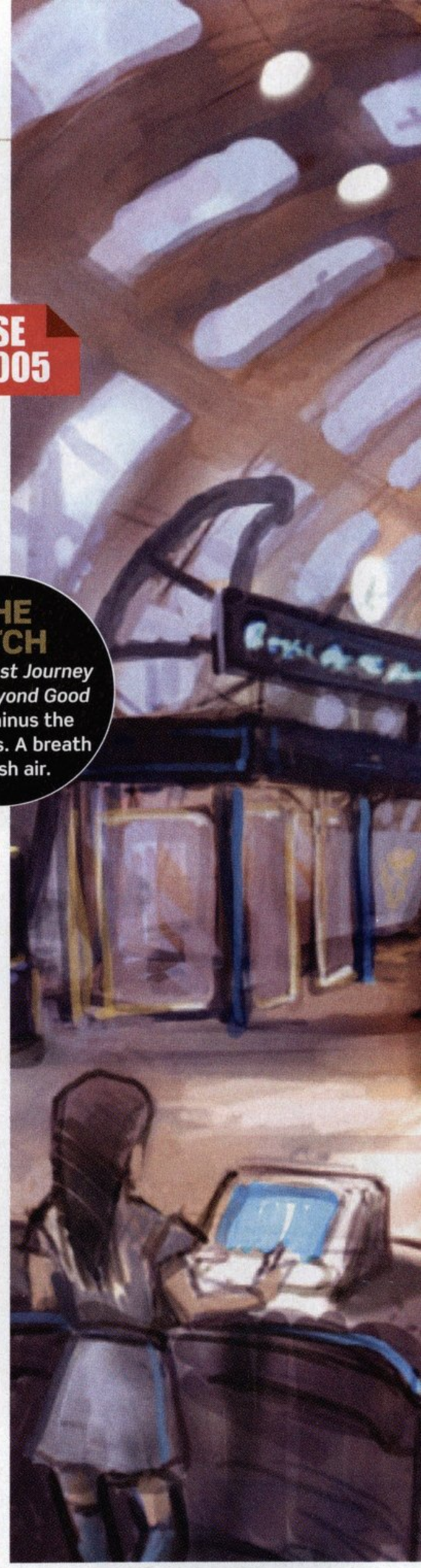
And there's so much more going on. Not only do you play Zoë, but also two other characters – a mysterious male figure that Funcom aren't discussing yet, and yes, thank goodness, April Ryan. The choice of characters at certain points is cited by Tørnquist as one of the many means by which *Dreamfall* will offer variety in the way you experience the story. And the universe will be expanded by a third world. All aboard for passage to the ominous-sounding Winter.

Since *Dreamfall* is still a year and a half away, saintly patience is now required. But our first glimpse leaves us confident that this is something special.

JOHN WALKER

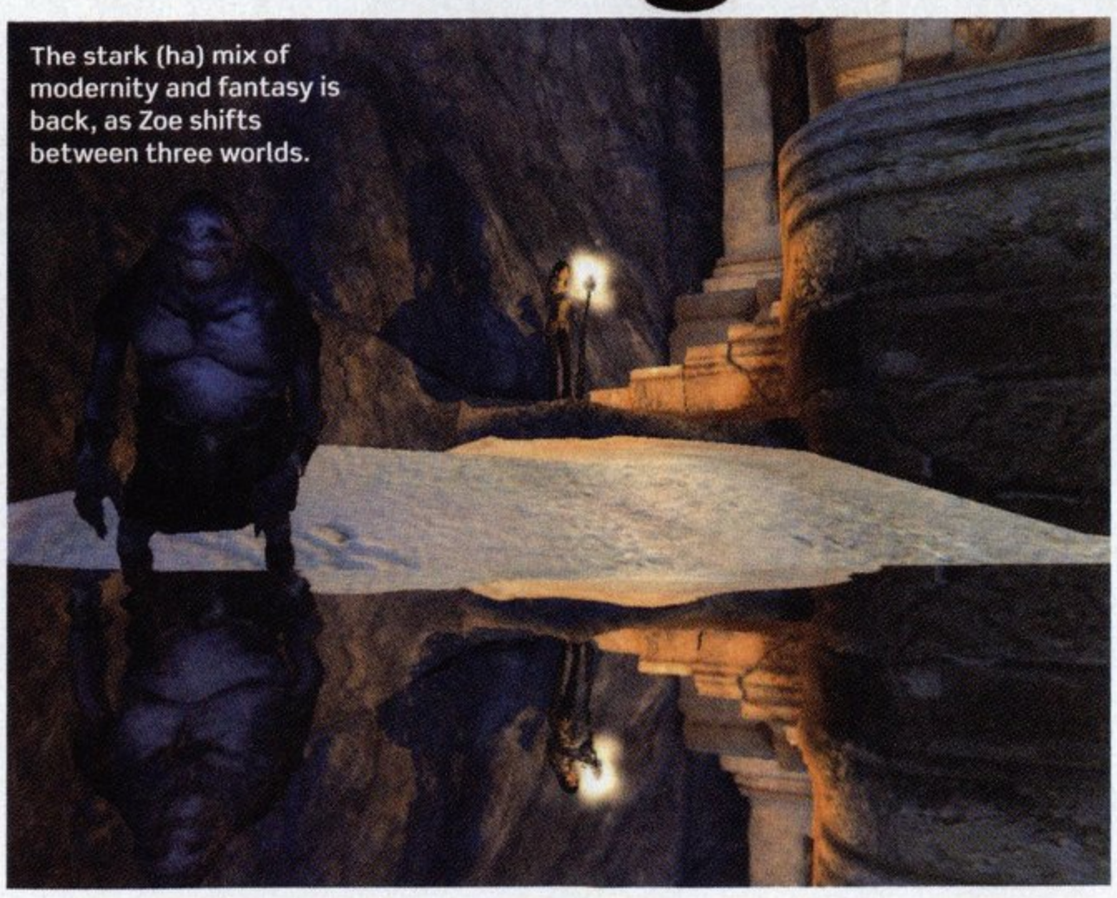
ON THE DISC There's more beguiling *Dreamfall* imagery to drool over here > Galleries.

THE PITCH
The Longest Journey meets *Beyond Good & Evil*, minus the space-pigs. A breath of fresh air.

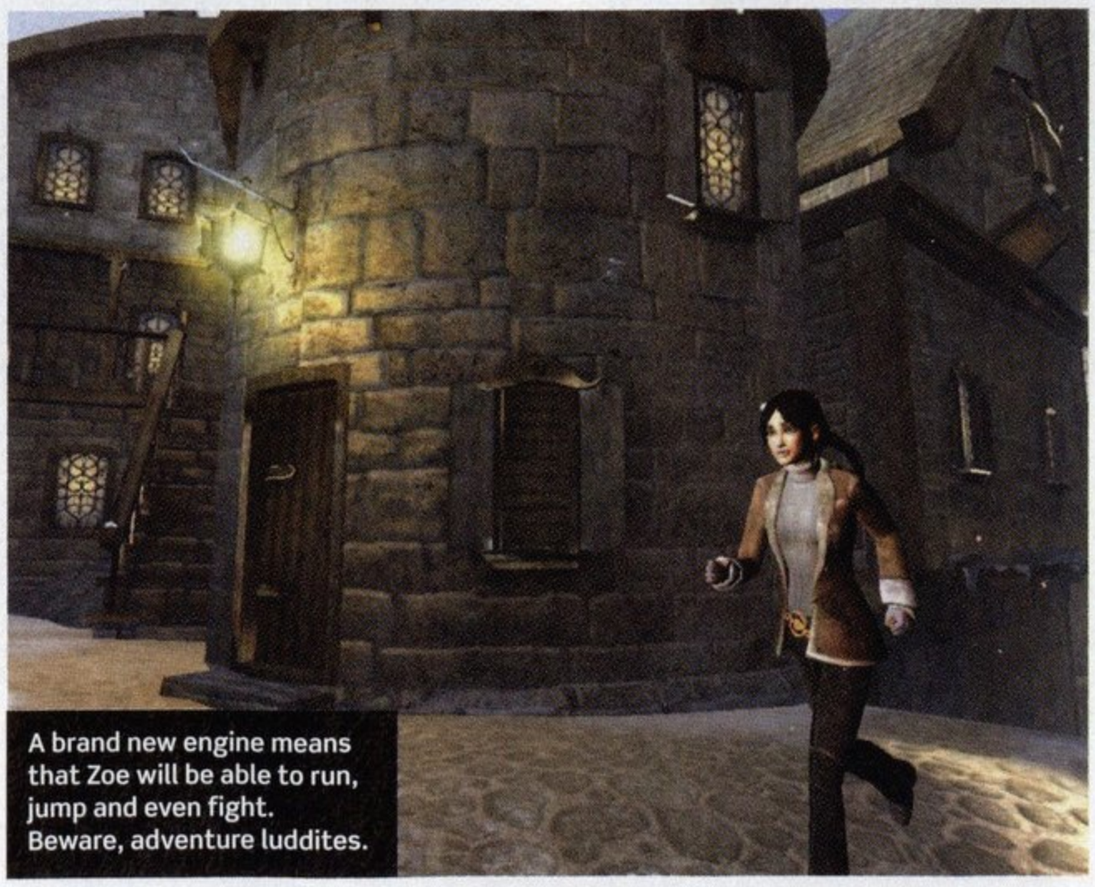


README

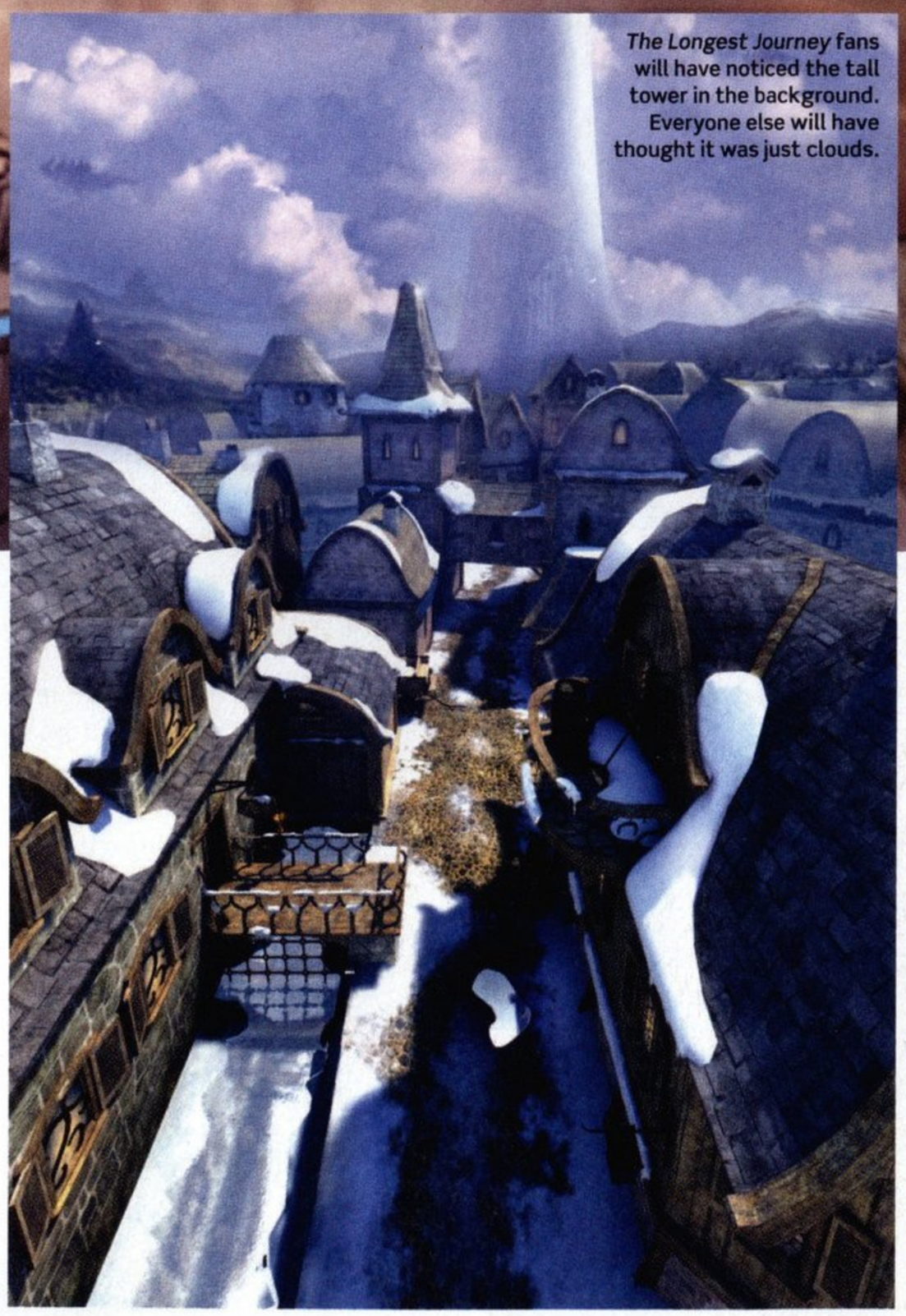
Publisher Funcom
Developer In-house
Link www.funcom.com
One of the finest gaming storytellers of our time revisits his remarkable multiverse.



The stark (ha) mix of modernity and fantasy is back, as Zoe shifts between three worlds.



A brand new engine means that Zoe will be able to run, jump and even fight. Beware, adventure luddites.



The Longest Journey fans will have noticed the tall tower in the background. Everyone else will have thought it was just clouds.

Dynamic fixed cameras are intended to provide a 'cinematic' atmosphere, but promise to never obscure play.

For you *Sudden Strike*, the war is over

Panzers

RELEASE LATE JULY

Ooh, watch out for that spike on its nose. Nasty.

Artillery strikes are pretty fearsome, and a great method of evicting dug-in troops.

Collateral damage has a real effect, as it creates areas of cover for infantry.

THE PITCH
Don your spikey helmet, and lightning-strike your way to victory in Europe.

Somewhat disappointingly, the Collins English Dictionary defines blitzkrieg as a 'Swift, intensive military attack designed to defeat the opposition quickly'. Which of course is true, but does gloss over the finer points to much the same extent as The Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Galaxy entry regarding our planet.

Fortunately, coders Stormregion are bang-on in the tactical doctrine department, and they clearly revel in the details. Not for *Panzers* the tank-rushes of yesteryear, nor the impregnable hedgehog base-building. Indeed, the mechanics of blitzkrieg have never been quite so lovingly modelled in an RTS environment. Take the *Sudden Strike* games – great mechanics, pig-ugly graphics. *C&C Generals*: great graphics, old-school mechanics. The graphical and tactical superior of both, *Panzers* makes you sit up and take note – as you'll see when you install the demo, something we advise you to do post-haste.

The delicate relationships between artillery, infantry, armour and air elements are a thing of beauty. Gorgeously-rendered infantry scout out the ground ahead, supported closely by tanks and mobile guns. Field guns bring up the rear, ready to pound buildings and vehicles, while limited Stuka and carpet-bomber attacks are but a click away. There's a clean sense of economy to the game, as you uncover enemy positions and work out the best way to tackle them, while aiming to preserve your forces. Like the real German army of the period, your resources are limited, so victory must be achieved in a series of swift and decisive kidney-punches. Let your forces get bogged down and you'll soon come to grief. This is a game that should be better suited to those that develop their strategies before they wander into battle rather than during it.

Victory is a series of swift kidney punches

The beauty of the game is that it *forces* you to examine your approach, and combine your units in the most effective groupings possible. Canter in slipshod with massive group-selections, and you'll earn an almighty spanking. But tactics that rely on specific unit-types achieving specific goals in battle – and here's the hook – can turn events around dramatically, and transform a struggle into a whitewash. Finally, a game which rewards you for finding intelligent solutions.

What's more, there's a quality to the visuals that immerses you in the muck and rubble of street-fighting. High explosives reduce urban conurbations to slag and clouds of vision-obscuring concrete dust. Zoom in on a church steeple, and you can see the bell hanging in the belfry before the whole lot comes tumbling down. The texture-work is also first-rate, especially if your video card is up anti-aliasing.

After the mild disappointment that was *Desert Rats vs Afrika Korps*, it's good to have a World War II RTS that's really worth looking forward to, and early indications suggest a level of refinement that many games aim for, yet few achieve. *Panzers* looks sumptuous, appears to present the right sorts of challenges and, happily, it doesn't fall into the populist trap of tarring the common German soldiery with the Nazi-brush. Let's hope *Panzers* manages to sustain this momentum through the course of an entire campaign.

AL BICKHAM

README

Publisher CDV
Developer Stormregion
Link www.panzers.de
Strikingly detailed scenery, satisfying mechanics, fast play. Should be a doozy.

Confirmation. *Elite 4* is launching

Elite 4

RELEASE MID 2006

David Braben is the Chairman and founder of Frontier Developments. He co-developed the original, incredible *Elite* with Ian Bell.

PCGA: It's rare for us to hear about a game so early in development. Right now, do you have a firm idea of what you want to put in the next Elite? Does this include scenarios, possible actions, possible career paths? Or do you start with the basic technology and see what you can achieve?

Braben: "I've had a clear idea of what I want to achieve for a long time, but it's pretty ambitious. What we've done is work out the new technologies we need to achieve to get the game we want to play, and work out which technologies are needed, and which might have lesser fallbacks, while still making a great game."

But what can you achieve with current technology? You've mentioned to us that displaying three or four thousand characters on one screen "could prove quite useful." How so?

"This is one of the technologies in *Roller Coaster Tycoon 3*, where we have already had many thousands of unique people on screen at once, each with their own facial expressions and animations, and we can build upon this for *Elite 4*. Crowd dynamics can be fascinating – imagine if someone draws a weapon, how a crowd might scatter. You may be in the crowd and not realise why people are running – or (perhaps more likely) it may be you… The major difference is that now you're a person, not a spaceship. You don't even have a spaceship at the start of the game (but remember – possession is nine tenths of the law…)."

On the Frontier homepage you say that you'll be releasing two Elite games: a multiplayer and a singleplayer version. Is this still the plan? How will the two games be related?

"Yes – the most time-consuming part of putting a game together is all the 'content' – designing everything from planets to market stalls and creatures. Whether this is then realised as a singleplayer or multiplayer world is a separate step – one or both would be possible."

How do you craft an authentic-feeling galaxy? Do you generate a thousand and pick one that you like?

THE PITCH
You are a trader, a pirate, a space captain. Go anywhere, do anything. Leave a rich corpse.

"It was a little like that in *Elite*, but in *Frontier* I had a great deal more control – you could specify varying amounts of detail, and let the automatic generation do the rest. This is how *Frontier* included the (then) hundred or so known nearest systems. *Elite 4* will extend this process a great deal further. Also, unlike in *Frontier*, the player can change things – you can even flatten a city, but obviously, this won't get you well liked!"

In *Elite 4*, you're a person, not a spaceship

You mentioned multiplayer a minute ago… We've been playing EVE Online a fair bit in the office. Have you played the game? Does it please you that this, along with other space-based games such as Freelancer and X2: The Threat have quite clearly been inspired by Elite?

"I saw an early version of *EVE*, but haven't played it; perhaps I should – but generally I steer clear of the *Elite*-a-likes. Some games (like Chris Robert's *Wing Commander* series) were inspired by *Elite* – and that was fine by me; they were clearly someone else's interpretation of this style of game, though I do find games like *X: Beyond the Frontier* irritating and unimaginative – simply trying to cash-in on the heritage of *Elite* without doing anything new. I think most people don't see what it is about *Elite* that is unique: that getting that degree of freedom in a game is a huge challenge. Interestingly Gary Penn, producer on the original *Grand Theft Auto*, described *GTA* to me as '*Elite* in a city' – it's the game that probably best approaches *Elite* in terms of gameplay."

Do you have a philosophy that guides the art in the game? Do you have any key terms that you use to guide your artists?

"Yes. We are trying to get a look that isn't immediately reminiscent of anything else (a tall order). We are planning to include Earth (again), and go for a mix of present day realistic styles from today set among alien-looking environments and surroundings. The Star Wars films are probably the closest match."

README
Publisher TBA
Developer Frontier Developments
Link www.frontierdevelopments.co.uk
Take it as read: *Elite 4* will be massive. That's on a galactic scale.

Looming menacingly close...

Half-Life

RELEASE SEPT

THE PITCH
Just another crowbar moment. The story of one man and his HEV suit.

One year on, and the G-Man was no less menacing. "Rise and shine, Mr Freeman. Rise and… shine. Not that I'm implying that you've been sleeping on the job. No-one's more deserving of a rest… but, let's just say your hour's come again. Wake up Mr Freeman. Wake up and smell the ashes." Like last year, Valve's E3 video presentation of *Half-Life 2* dominated the show-floor chatter, their 20-minute video presentation book-ended by the scary, suited git.

The talking point was not technology, but psychology. Valve intend to hammer every emotional button in the gamer psyche. We witnessed characters that teased, taunted and flirted with the mute Gordon. Meanwhile, we felt genuine pity for the put-upon populace of City 17, who are continually beaten down by the evil, black-booted Combine. The poor residents clearly fear for their lives: the Combine soldiers happily break down their doors and drag them outside for 'processing'.

Characters teased, taunted and flirted with Gordon

ON THE DISC We've assembled a batch of gorgeous screenshots for your viewing pleasure > Galleries.

Why such lengths? Is this not a first-person *shooter*? Well yes, but *Half-Life 2* looks set not only to show what Source can do, but to show a disbelieving world the emotional heights gaming can reach. But trust the G-Man to leave us hanging. "That's all for now, Gordon. The right man in the wrong place can make all the difference in the world. I will see you again." Soon, we hope.

TIM EDWARDS

README

Publisher Vivendi
Developer Valve
Link www.half-life.com
The return of Gordon is up there with the Second Coming. Pray for swift redemption.

The Striders are just through that gate, but the citizens aren't going to head out there without support. Lock and load...

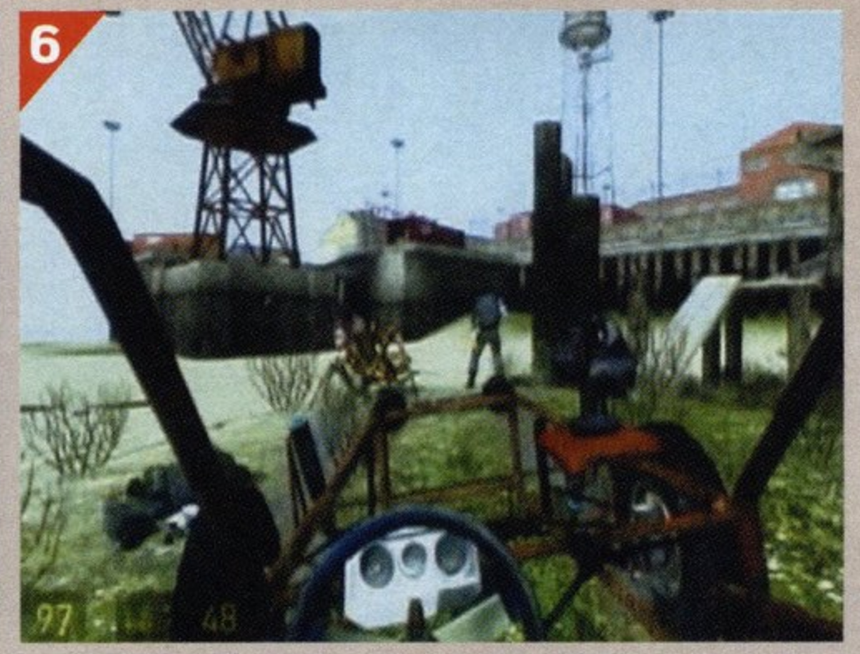
...Gordon's been caught out in the open. The Striders even shrug off laser-guided rockets. It looks like it's time to retreat...

The Striders are absolutely monstrous, bio-mechanical beasts, that cause havoc wherever they walk. The reason they're so feared? Because they'll happily spike men like kebabs on their legs.

The sparse cover doesn't seem to protect Gordon from the Striders' main weapon – it seems to slow time itself.

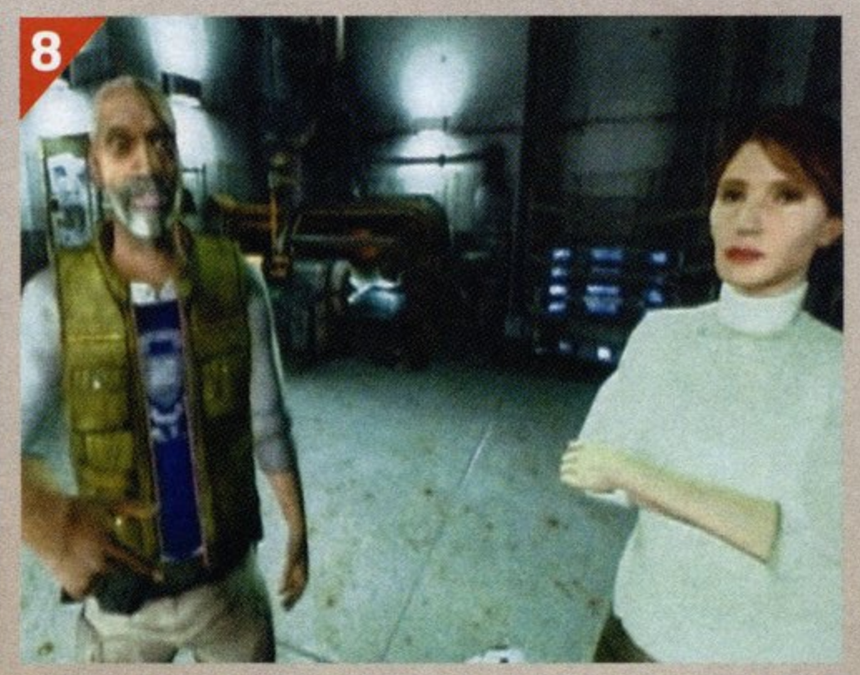
And it's come to this. The Strider towers above, while Gordon scrabbles around for ammunition. Cue a fade to black...

Gordon has managed to flip his jeep on the edge of a cliff. All it takes to get back on the road is a shove from the manipulator gun.



While scooting across the sea-bed in the jeep, Gordon comes across Combine soldiers fending off an ant-lion attack.

This is a problem. While scouting Ravenholm, Gordon is caught in a Zombie ambush. But it doesn't stop him reaching Eli's lab...



...in record time. This young lady flirts with Gordon, despite Eli (on the left) wanting to palm off his daughter Alyx on him.

Watch the skies

Call of Duty United Offensive

RELEASE NOVEMBER

United Offensive is the first expansion pack for *Call of Duty*, the gritty and gripping WWII first-person shooter that was the talk of 2003. These pages are a first glimpse of one of the pack's stand-out episodes: a frantic air-attack mission in the British campaign that straps you into a stricken B-17 bomber at the mercy of incoming German fighters. AIEEEE!

All is calm when your mission begins, but the deep purr of the engines is soon interrupted by gunfire as Messerschmitts scythe through the clouds to feed your undercarriage a fusillade of hot lead. DAKKA! DAKKA!

You take to the gun turret first, rattling back some bullet-shaped ripostes of your own. It's not easy. Trailing a fast-moving bandit and leading your fire to anticipate its flightpath takes expertise. And, just as the technique is mastered, German bullets rip through your tail gunner. BLEEARGH!

Heroically, you dash back, kick hapless Chalky out the way, and man the machinegun. Wipe out the waves of attackers fast enough to survive. Too slow, and you'll join your fellow bombers as they're shot from the sky. PHUT. PHUT. [cough] WWWeeeeeeee.

A diagram on the HUD highlights each critical areas as damage is taken. When the engines explode you must squeeze past the side gunners to make emergency repairs. Then a cockpit fire breaks out. CRACKLE!

German bullets rip through your tail gunner

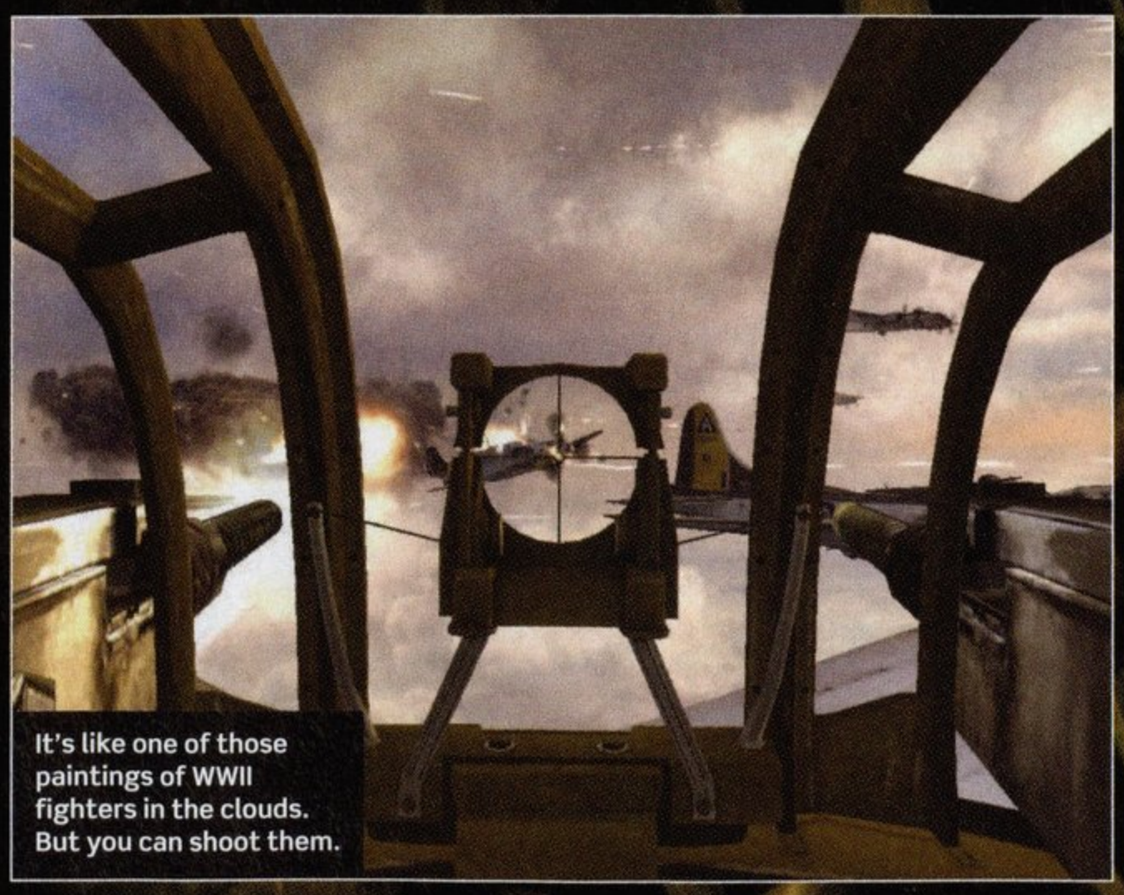
Endure this 20-minute frenzy and your colander-like plane wheezes over the objective. Release your deadly cargo of death, and close an unforgettable chapter in this latest *Call of Duty*. HOORAY!

MARK SUTHERNS

THE PITCH
The *Call of Duty* experience takes to the Battle of the Bulge, Kursk and the skies.

README

Publisher Activision
Developer Gray Matter
Link www.callofduty.com
Can we take the intensity of the bigger new battles? Of course. Bring it on.



It's like one of those paintings of WWII fighters in the clouds. But you can shoot them.

WEAPONS CHECK
Success in this mission is all about anticipating the direction of attack and shifting to the right gun at the right time. At first you'll only have one position, but if you lose your tail or side gunners you can shift to their positions to take up the fight.

AT THE SHARP END
The mission begins at the front of the plane, where you can access the gun turret atop your trusty B-17 bomber. As events unfold, though, you could be called into the cockpit itself to help repair the damage dished out by those dastardly German guns.

FLUFFY
Gray Matter have enhanced the graphics engine to include particle effects that are particularly evident in this level, as the waves of German fighters tear through the cotton-bud clouds and unleash their deadly, chattering guns.

CREW CUTS
Your fellow crewmembers will lend their gunnery skills as you struggle to fight off the waves of attackers. Keep knocking the bandits out of the sky and you'll keep you comrades alive; miss your targets and you'll start taking casualties.

WE'LL MEET AGAIN
Once you've reached the target, your bombardier will order you to take up position in the centre of the plane. Here you'll get to wind open the bomb carriage and watch as your unfriendly bombs fall through the clouds.

Building an empire one breast implant at a time

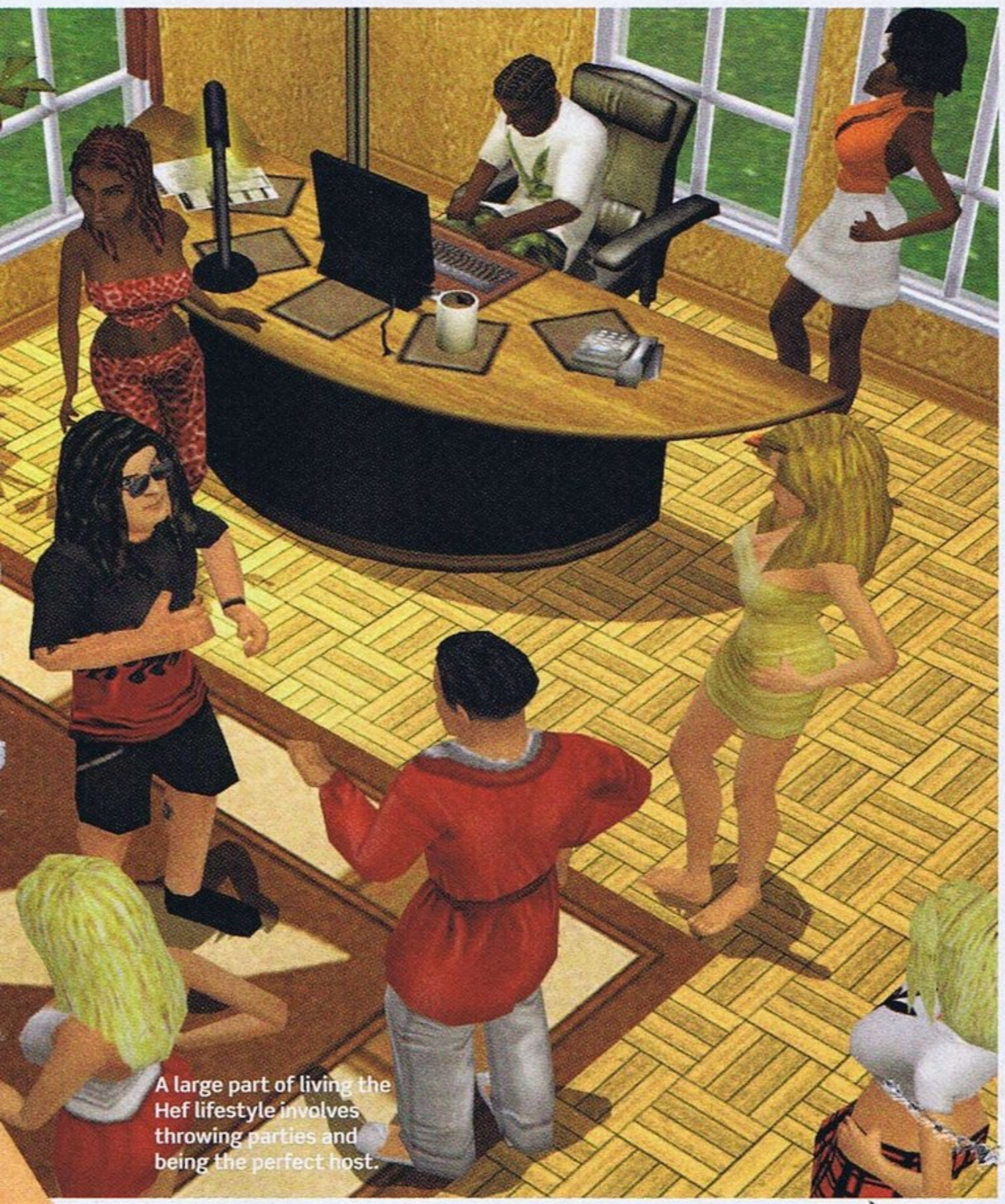
Playboy
The Mansion

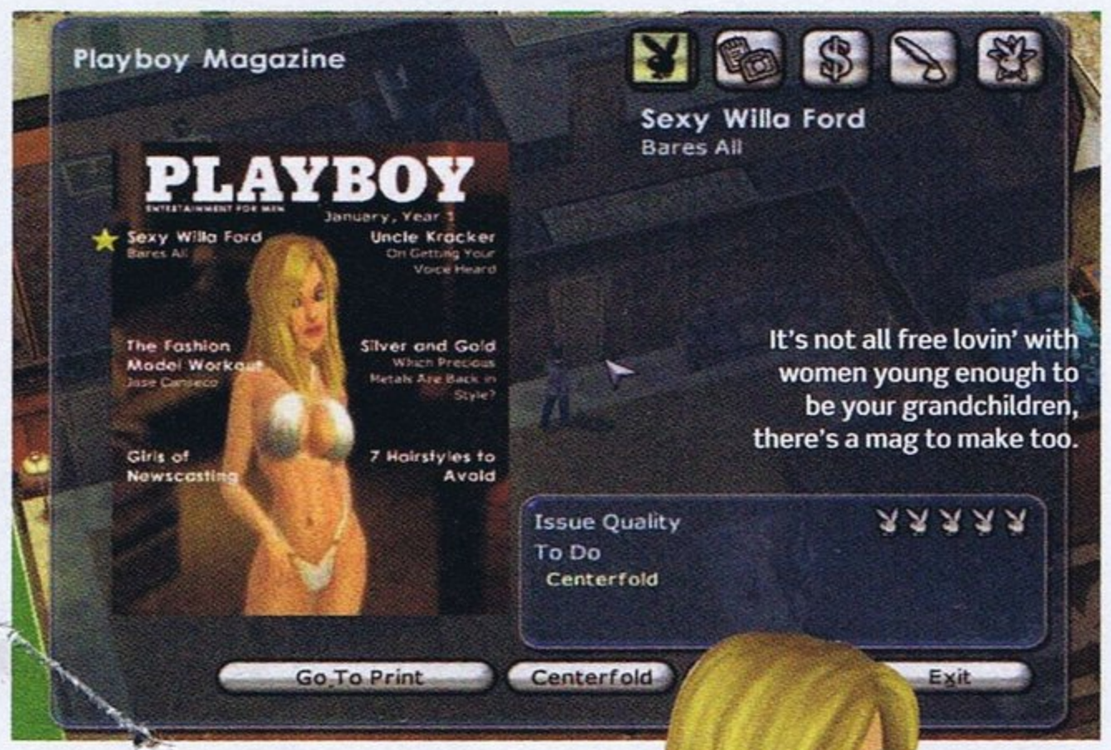
RELEASE NOVEMBER

Of all the strange and eclectic premises for PC games this world has to offer, *Playboy: The Mansion* truly must rate as one of oddest. On the surface at least. After all, the magazine most famed for either being guiltily hidden under the bed or just being read "for the articles" would hardly seem meaty material for the game treatment.

What has to be remembered, however, is that much like Reality TV, Reality Gaming is now at the crest of the zeitgeist wave. Who would have imagined *The Sims* would have been such a hit before its release? It introduced a whole genre of game that literally reveled in the mundane. We've gone from *Space Invaders* (back in those halcyon eighties) to titles where you need to control the washing and toilet habits of virtual people. Bowel movement simulators? Strange days, indeed.

Playboy: The Mansion is perhaps the most logical extension of *Sims*-style gaming. Even the most ardent *Sims* advocate would have to admit that trying to keep their dull little virtual lives interesting became grating after a while. Hence the multiple add-ons, imitators and upcoming sequel. The market is open for something new. The life of someone we, as gamers or just plain boring human beings, could never hope to attain but would always want. And who would most men (and some women) like to be rather





THE PITCH

Imagine *the Sims*, but with far less of the mundane and more of what most men would rather be doing

than Hugh (if you've seen her, I've probably slept with her) Hefner?

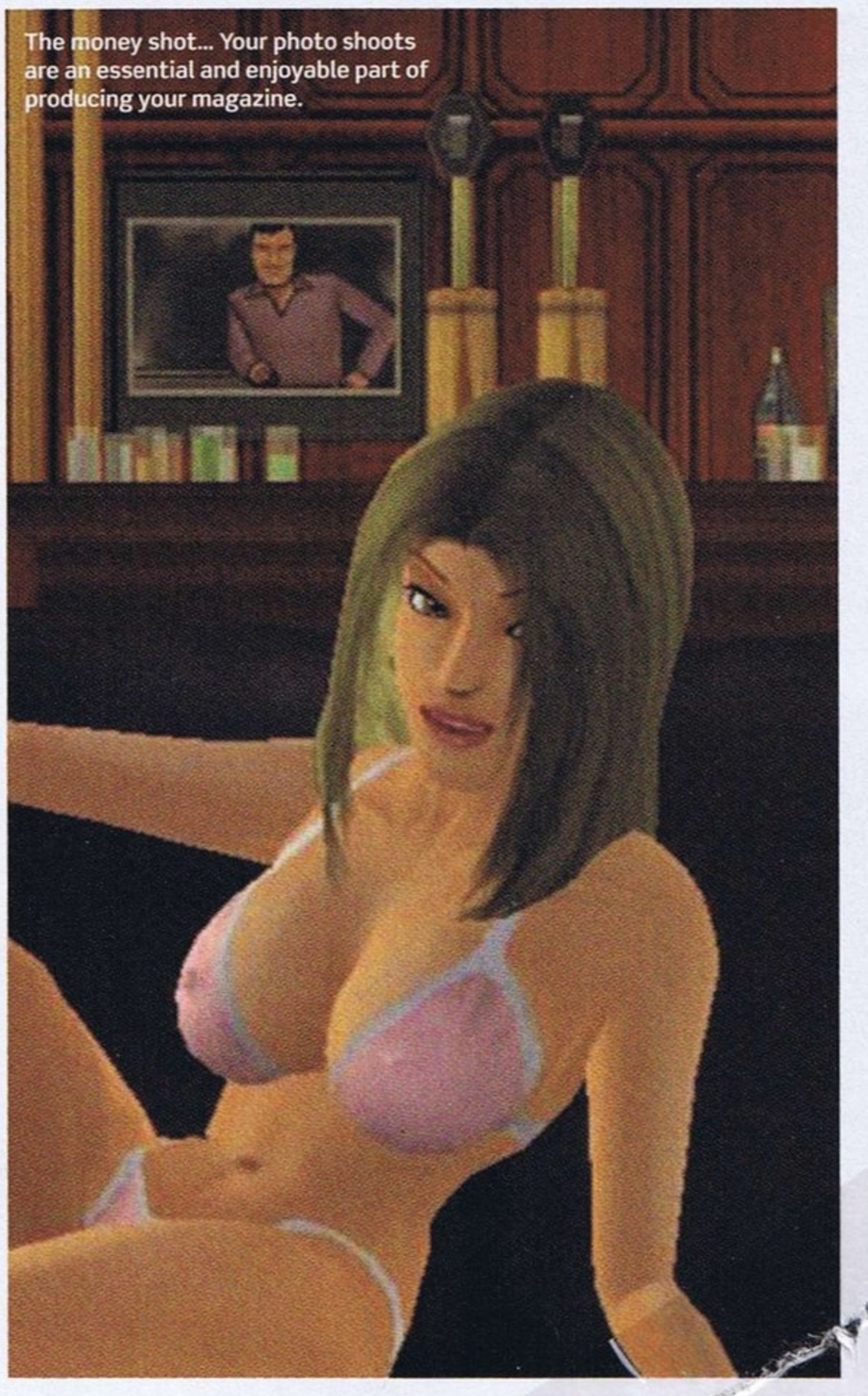
Playboy the magazine can appear a little old fashioned, even quaint, by today's standards. But it has to be remembered that the first issue that appeared in 1953 set America, and much of the world, alight with controversy. Hef paved the way for a new attitude towards sex, and hedonism without guilt. His world of manly pursuits, naked minxes and martinis swiftly became a phenomenon.

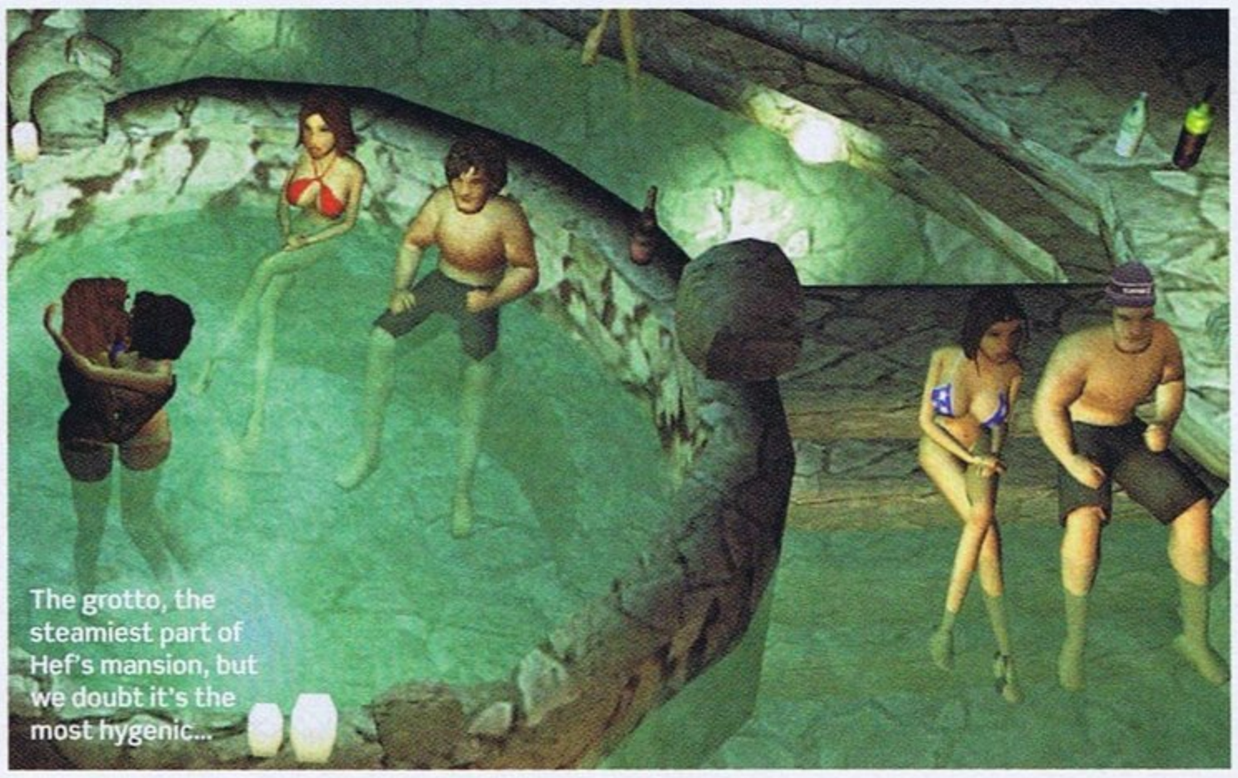
Essentially the story of Playboy is one of empire building, for that is what the man and the magazine have become.

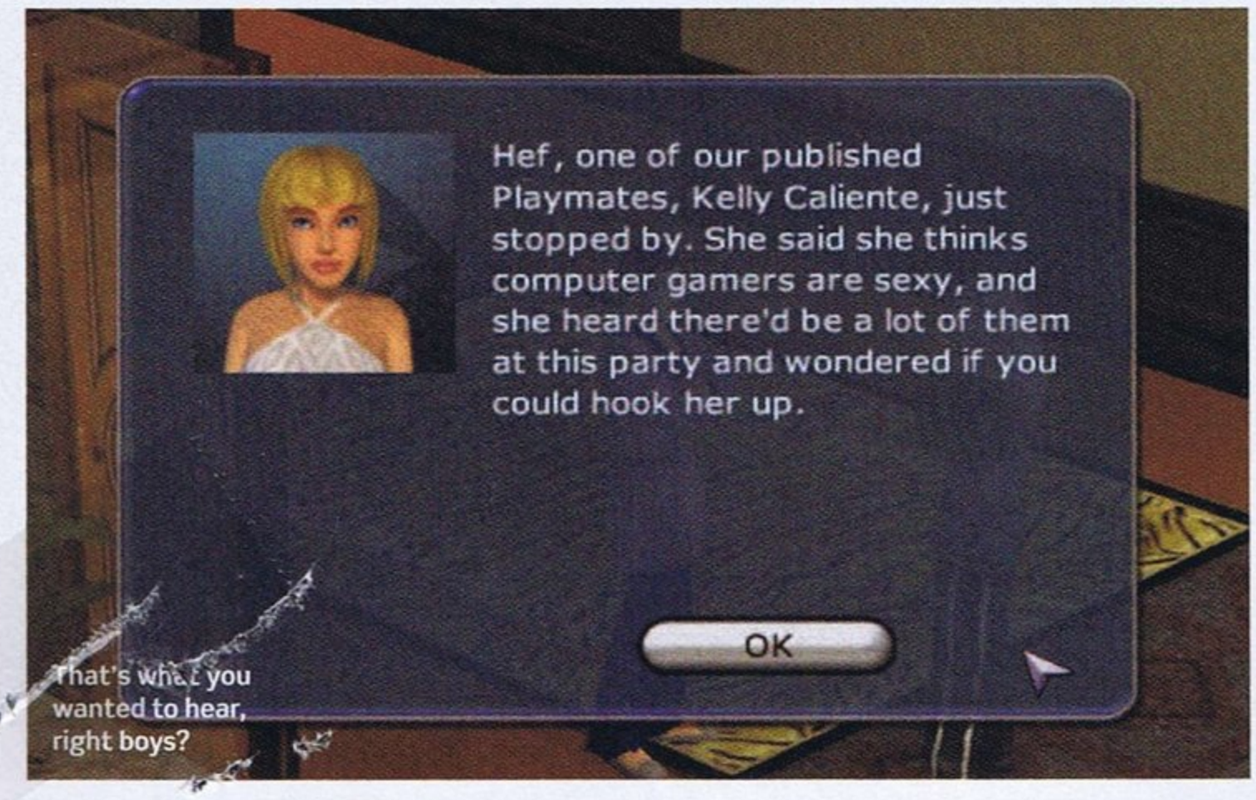
This too is the premise for *Playboy: The Mansion*. After all we've had sim games where we've created theme parks, cities, interplanetary colonies - why not a magazine empire?

The build of the game we were handed unsurprisingly resembles *The Sims* most closely in terms of gameplay. You see the world from a sort of floating deity POV, and can zoom in and out of your main area of play, which is, naturally enough, the Playboy Mansion. You assume the role of Hef, but not the rather scary-looking version of today, this is the leaner, younger Hef of yesteryear, decked out in his finest smoking jacket, as was the style at the time. This Hef is about to release his very first issue of Playboy (although the game seems to be set in the present day) and it's up to you to make sure everything runs smoothly.

It's not just the mag that needs to be published, however, you need to ensure that you are a popular social figure, favoured by the press and a


The money shot... Your photo shoots are an essential and enjoyable part of producing your magazine.


The grotto, the steamiest part of Hef's mansion, but we doubt it's the most hygenic...

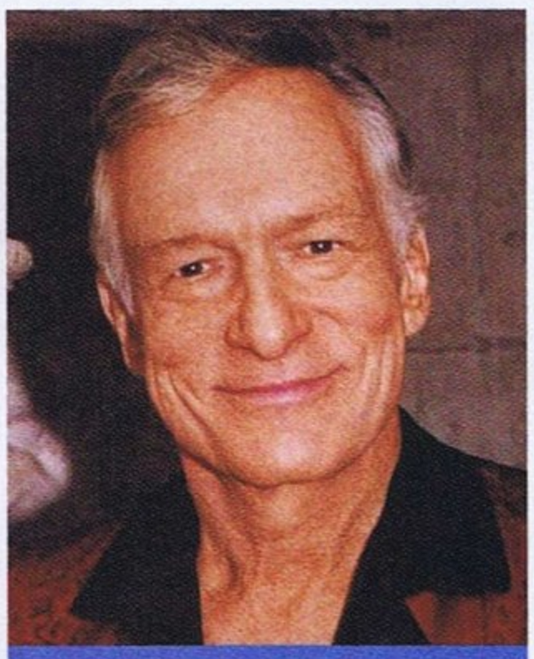

Hef, one of our published Playmates, Kelly Caliente, just stopped by. She said she thinks computer gamers are sexy, and she heard there'd be a lot of them at this party and wondered if you could hook her up.
OK
That's what you wanted to hear, right boys?

Parties can be thrown night or day, indoors or out.

hit with the ladies. Basically every aspect of the Playboy lifestyle is included as an aspect of gameplay, especially in the Main Campaign Mode. This is a 12-mission romp where you'll build up Playboy the way Hef did throughout the past 50 years. The Empire Game, your other option of play, is more free and allows you to set your own goals and go at your own pace. These two options should cater to both those style of gamers who feel the desperate need to compete and those who wish to see how many super models they can bed.

Ironic considering the subject matter, but when it comes to aesthetics, *Playboy: The Mansion*'s is doing little to bring the genre forward. You'll see 3D characters walking around the titular mansion, which includes six different areas: the pool/grotto area, the upstairs, the downstairs, the lawn, the driveway, and the clubhouse. At the outset you'll start with just yourself and a couple of assistants, including photographers, Bunnies, and editors. You can have the characters interact with one another (though you only have direct control over Hef), but the general aim is to create enough content to publish a magazine. The content can include photo layouts, articles, and interviews. You'll have access to demographic information that shows what topics your readers are interested in. If it's architecture, you can send a photographer out on assignment to snap pictures of pretty buildings. If it's music, you can invite a famous musician over for an interview. Some of the celebs are real, like Jose Canseco, the band Sum41, Willa Ford, Melissa Joan Hart, and Xzibit and some are made up, if fairly obvious caricatures of the real thing. Apparently more real life celebs are signing on every day so it'll be interesting to see who ends up in the final version.

Of course Playboy wouldn't be Playboy without the Bunnies and models (Bunnies, we're told, are like Uber Playmates. It's the status ambitious Playmates strive to attain. Who knew?), once they're in your employ they can help you with mag content. As you publish magazines, and gain fame and fortune, you can throw more and more lavish parties at your

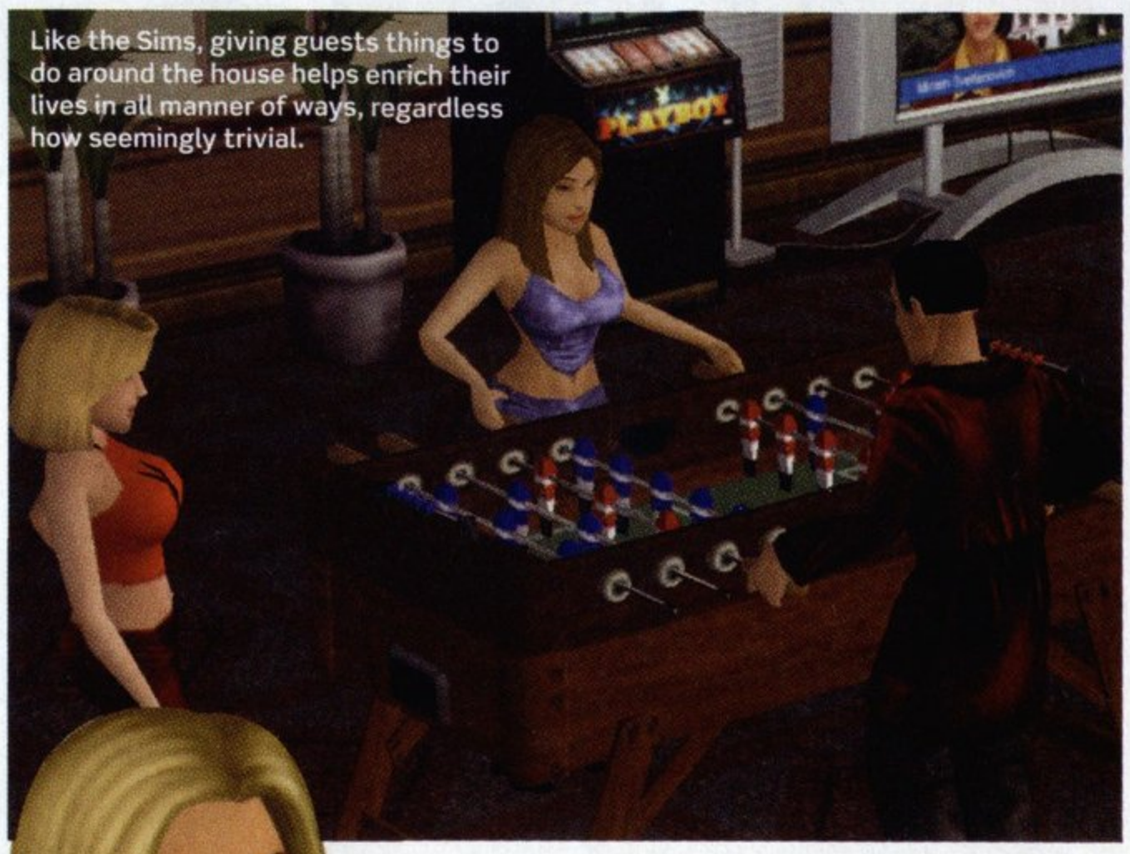


WISH YOU WERE HIM?

Hugh Hefner
Man among Men

You'd be smiling too...

It's easy to dismiss the mighty Hef as just a dirty old man who takes nudie photos but, really, his impact on popular culture is indelible. Ever since the first Playboy was published in December of 1953, featuring the now-iconic photo calendar of Marilyn Monroe, he was a hit. Described by Chicago columnist, Bob Greene, as a "force of nature", Hef has managed to bear the brunt of feminist backlashes, accusations of being a "smut peddler" and the competition of other moguls like Larry Flynt (Hustler's creator) to become the editor of the best selling men's magazine in the world. He also recently dated blonde triplets, which is pretty cool too.


Like the Sims, giving guests things to do around the house helps enrich their lives in all manner of ways, regardless how seemingly trivial.
PLAYBOY

mansion and invite more famous celebrities over. The more successful you are at building fame, throwing a good drunken bash, and smoozing with the right celebs, the easier it will be to ask these celebs for interviews. Each character in the game has needs, motives, attributes, eccentricities - the whole box and dice. They might enjoy talking about movies, drinking like madmen, or making time with the ladies (or people of the same gender, no one judges in the world of Playboy). Your ability to fulfil those needs as the world's biggest host with the most will determine your success in the game.

Okay, now comes the question you've probably been pondering internally if not out loud: Will there be nude photo shoots? Well, of course there will. In a game where you need to keep angry scruffy rockers like Andrew WK happy and liquored up at parties you'd want to be able to ask young ladies to pose nude for you and also have the ability to take the shots yourself. It's only fair, really. So, as Hef, you can ask one of the models on staff to be photographed as the Playmate of the Month. From here, you can set up a camera in any part of your house. The game will switch into a first-person mode, and your model will begin posing. In the build we saw the model strutted her stuff in underwear but apparently in the final version you will be able to do some coaching of shapely vixen, such as asking her to lie on a nearby bed or to take off her top, as all while you snap photos from the camera. Naturally you can then choose the classiest shots that will be included in the magazine.

Your guests can and will engage in the beast with two backs...

In addition to the topless nudity there will be the opportunity for sex. Hef, the Bunnies, and any of your guests can and will engage in the beast with two backs just about everywhere throughout the mansion. At this stage it's not really clear how explicit things are going to be, and reports are conflicting. Censorship can affect sales, so it's a matter of Ubisoft figurig out what they can get away with. However one thing has been stressed - the PC version will have sex and nudity and will not pixelate out the "good bits" in the manner of *The Sims*. But, really, if you're looking to *Playboy: The Mansion* for cheap thrills alone you're probably a) Going to be disappointed and b) In need of a hobby.

So far *Playboy: The Mansion* is looking like it could be a real surprise. Rather than be the exploitation fest it could so easily become it seems to be a slightly tongue-in-cheek, but very deep and detailed lifestyle sim. This is a game where you can alter the physical characteristics of anyone and everyone, rename them (so your friends can join your empire), decorate the mansion in which you live and actually design a magazine from cover to cover.

Not interested in leading a virtual life? Perhaps this should be the exception to the rule.. After all, of all the good lives to lead - Hugh Hefner's got to be pretty high on the happenin' list. The final verdict will be in when the game ships in November.

THE VITALS

Publisher Ubisoft
Developer Cyberlore
Web www.ubi.com
It's *the Sims* for men, with buxom bunnies and wild parties replacing tedious toilet calls.

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Star Trek, the most successful sci-fi series ever has given birth to many spinoffs and side-series. Our favourite of these is Star Trek: Voyager, and to celebrate the arrival of the 2nd series on DVD, our friends at Paramount are giving it away!

To be in the running to win one of six Voyager DVD series, answer the following question: How many series of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* were made? Send your answer to: PCGA@derwenthoward.com.au with the subject "Trek-head". Entries close July 17.

WIN *EDimensional Extravaganza*

Audio-visual peripheral heaven...

In this month's hardware section we put both the Audio FX vibrating USB headset and the Wireless 3D Vision System from eDimensional. In terms of throwing yourself into your gaming experience this is about as extreme as you can get short of some manner of electric shocker peripheral (that we suspect may face stiff opposition over ever being available).

PC Games Addict and TN Marketting are giving you chance to experince both of these excellent eDimensional products along with their prized PC gaming rig.

5 PACKS VALUED AT $250

All you need to do to be in the winning for the Audio FX and Wireless 3D Vision System is answer a few simple questions at the following URL: www.edimensional.tnmarketing.com.au/edcomp.php

There's also 10 runner-up prizes of 20% discount vouchers for some lucky folks who don't manage to win a main prize.

It's Your section!

Or put simply, ways for you to get your hands on free stuff...

Your Pictures...

The premise is simple, you take a screenshot where something funny is happening, add a hilarious caption and email them both to us. The submission each month that tickles more ribs than the rest will earn its sender a set of **Creative** T7700 surround speakers valued at $299.00!

Your Reviews...

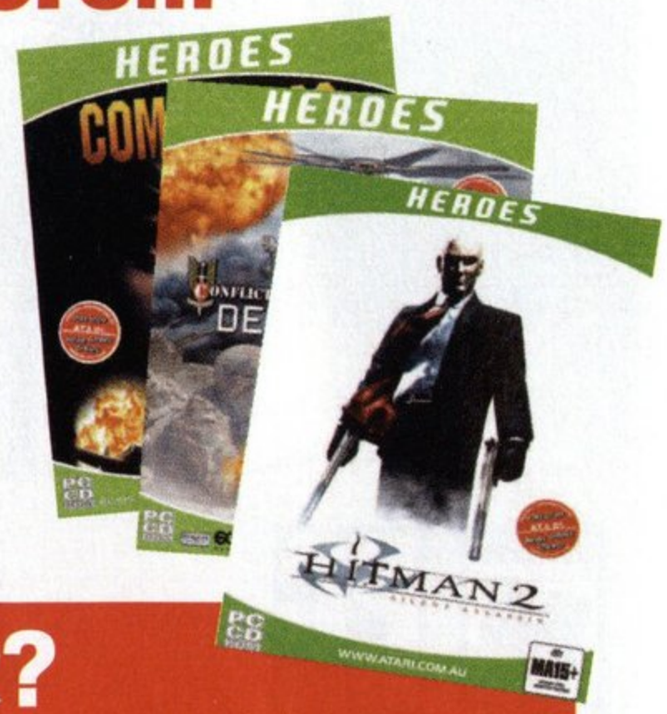
Sure, sometimes you'll think we're bang on, but there's always more than one way you can look at a game, and we're certain that some of our readers can succinctly highlight why a certain game is brilliant, banal or somewhere in-between.

Aside from serving as a means of trawling for new contributors (yes, we're serious), we'll give the best reader review each month a **JNC** SSF-500 MP3 player valued at $300. Submissions MUST be 200-500 words only.

Your Letters...

Although we've been receiving reader mail and responding to a lot of it directly for since our inception, it's about time we paid tribute to the most cunning and insightful quips from our readers.

The letter deemed either most intelligent or amusing by our staff each month will receive a bundle of games from **Atari's** "Heroes" range!



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It's simple really, just email your submission to **PCGA@derwenthoward.com.au** with either **"Letters"**, **"Reviews"** or **"Pictures"** as the subject, as is appropriate. Please attach all images as .jpgs (do NOT compress them), and any reviews as .txt files. Finally, include your full name, age, postal addres and phone number, lest you prove too hard to contact. Start winning now!

PC GAMES ADDICT

REVIEWS

In which we put the new releases before our panel of PC gaming experts

Major Tom?

It's our last chance to mention this space oddity...

If you didn't get my rather lame pun, you're either not at all into the works of one David Bowie or perhaps you simply don't have *Ground Control 2* on your mind. There was a slight lack of a consensus on the merits of this title, with our RTS wizards who have mastered the art of resource management being a tad underwhelmed, while those who crave pure tactics felt this was a fantastic no nonsense futuristic wargame.

In this sense, *Ground Control 2* helped remind us that in this day and age of multi-million dollar game development, it's not so much a case of "Does this game suck or rock?" but rather, "Is this my sort of game?" It's something that other entertainment industries have understood for years, and hopefully more and more games enthusiasts will come to appreciate as well, as too many of the 'hardcore' slag off if it's not what they want.

Back to this issue's game reviews, the other game of note has to be *City of Heroes*, the first MMORPG to work around a super-hero theme. As much as we're all fantasy-lovin' geeks to some extent here, we're savouring the chance to play a major MMORPG that is devoid of reference to elves, orcs or a +4 Codpiece of Confusion.

Joint Operations and *Soldiers: Heroes of WWII* are also essential reads, and as you'll notice, all of these afore-mentioned reviews uses a new pictorial approach to let you in on what's going on. They say a picture tells a thousand words, but we found that it starts to look god-awful once you try to make it say anything more than about 150 or 200 at the most. We hope you like it.

DAN TOOSE
EDITOR

Scrutinised this issue...

City of Heroes 54
Ground Control 2 50
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Manhunt 64
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The Punic Wars: A Clash of Two Empires 66
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World Championship Rugby 60

The PCGA review rig

There's no point reviewing new games on old PCs, otherwise we wouldn't be doing them justice. After all, how can you tell how well a game runs until you've seen it on the best machine available?

That's why we've turned to Emagen. Not just because they're able to keep working with an up to date PC to put the games through their paces, but also due to the fact that we're certain that they do the best system assembly in the business. Look at the picture below and you won't find a stray ATA cable or screw out of place. If you're serious about assembling the best machine you can, you'd do well to contact Emagen.

THE PC GAMES ADDICT REVIEW MACHINE:

- AMD Athlon XP 3000+
- Asus A7N8X Deluxe
- Corsair TWINX 512MB PC3200
- 128MB Radeon 9800 Pro
- 19" Mitsubishi Flat CRT Monitor
- Western Digital WD800JB HDD
- 16X DVD, 52x24x52 CDRW
- Antec LanBoy Chassis
- Mitsubishi 104Key Black Keyboard
- Microsoft Intellimouse Explorer

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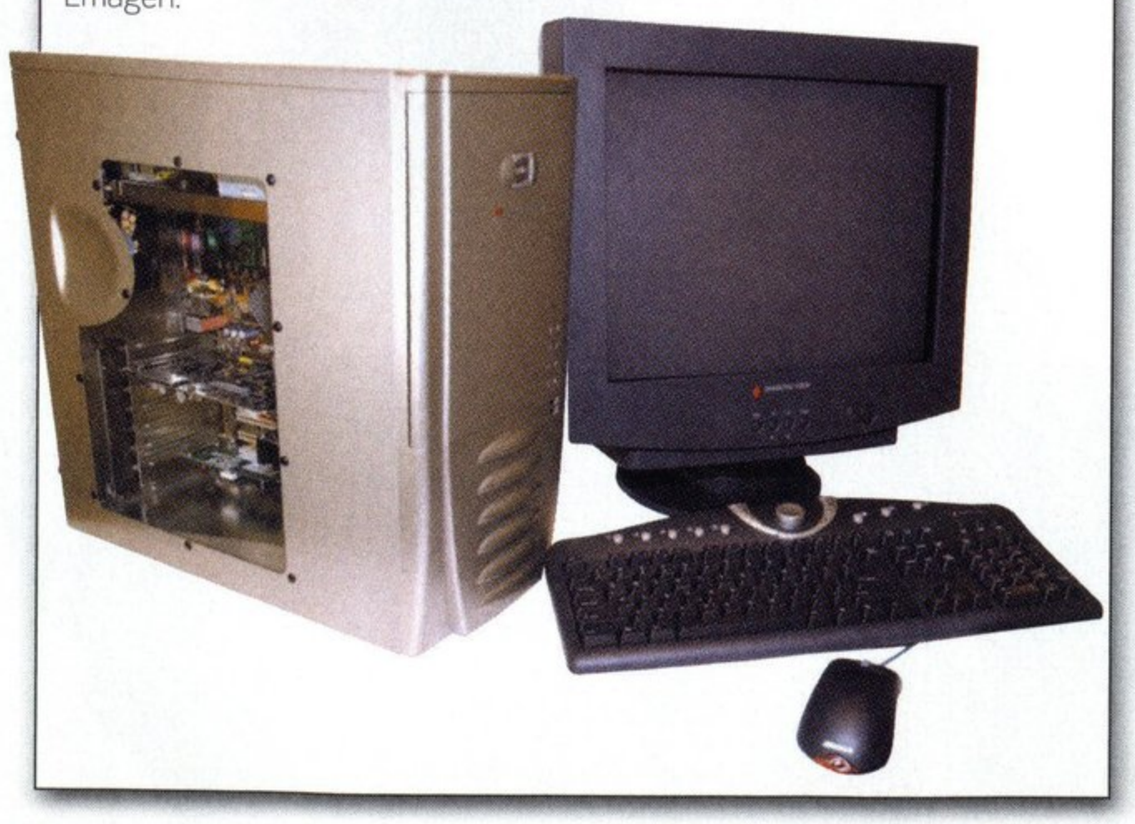


Our Scoring System Explained

0-19% ABOMINABLE
Game crime. If you see this game do not approach. Call the appropriate authorities and have it removed.

20-49% POOR
A deeply troubled and troubling effort. Think twice, even if you find it lurking in the bargain bin.

50-69% MEDIOCRE
Fans of the theme or genre can extract limited fun if they persevere. Otherwise, put your wallet away.

70-84% GOOD
Consistently enjoyable but lacks that spark of genius. Superior alternatives are usually available.

85-89% EXCELLENT
A first-class title that guarantees great gaming. Fans of the genre will revel in it.

90%+ EXCEPTIONAL
Instant classic. These games are worth trying even if you don't normally like the genre.

THE PCGA AWARD

Just as our scoring system implies, if it gets 85% or higher, it's a game worthy of your hard earned dollar. Our **GOLD GAME** award will help you spot games **PCGA** recommend.

PC GAMES GOLD GAME

RIGHT TO REPLY

Think we've treated a game unfairly? Or perhaps we've gone too easy on a game. Address your redress to **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au** or write to us via snail mail by sending your correspondence to **Feedback, PC Games Addict, Derwent Howard, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355**

GROUND CONTROL 2 OPERATION EXODUS

Grunts are still heard in the war of the future...

PC GAMES GOLD GAME ★★★★★

Sometimes, it's necessary to 'tactically withdraw'.

Particle effects buzz around the combat like flies around... something smelly.

The dropship provides major firepower when it comes in to land.

It's not that often that a game's title can so succinctly describe the core of the gameplay as is the case with *Ground Control II*. Like its predecessor, *GCII* is all about directing sci-fi military forces to capture and hold points of a map, devoid of any typical RTS base-building exercises. In essence, this *GCII* has far more in common with say Myth 3 or Medieval: Total War than Starcraft, being more of a real-time tactical game (an RTT?) than a traditional RTS.

Although not as an actual unit on the field of battle, the single player campaign puts you in the role of Captain Jacob Angelus of the Northern Star Alliance (NSA). Things aren't so hot for Jake, with his home world Morningstar under invasion from the Terran Empire. It's your typical sci-fi 'humans still fighting humans' scenario, with a novel twist. A long lost race of alien warriors wielding organic nano-tech weaponry known as the Viron start helping the Terrans a few missions down the track, bringing in a load of plot twists and back-story that doesn't bite.

With the odd recon or escort mission providing the occasional exception, Angelus' job generally revolves around using what he's got to maximum effect so he can secure 'victory points' on the battlefield. Doing so directly affects how much funds the NSA give Jacob to spend on new troops and hardware to be brought in via dropship. Often the way to get what you need to strengthen up is to go forth and fight rather than dig in and wait.

When you're looking at a game as visually gratifying as *GC II*, you won't want to wait. With full control of the viewpoint, the

Thumbnail Review

A futuristic RTS free of resource hording

- ☑ Scorch earth with artillery
- ☑ Lay an egg
- ☑ Gorgeous visuals
- ☒ Clichés mixed with originality

It may only have two races to play as but the tactical feel of *GCII* makes it feel like there's more there.

TAKEN APART

"There's Martians in the marsh..."

Team
AP: 3074
13 / 75%
No Dropship
ASSAULT TROOPERS These can be combined to create more potent units. They can also be obtained via drop pod, one of the Viron artillery options.
BIO RADAR Planting this on a hill is just one of the many objectives the troubled Viron forces face in their quest.
CRAFT These basic troop-carrying vehicle units can be combined to create new unit types. Two of these create a mobile mortar platform.
BUILDINGS Can now be occupied by troops. This gives them greater toughness and allows just a few to hold important areas for a long time.
1
2
3
AIR SUPPORT Can be controlled from this hub, which, delightfully, includes drop pods full of troops for the Virons, which can be put down anywhere on the battlefield to your tactical advantage...

ON THE DISC Try out *Ground Control 2* for yourself with this multi-player demo > Demos

player can always get a stunning take of the effect-laden environments and battles. Particle effects, reflections, special lighting and pixel shading all combine to produce wonderful results.

Although much harder to notice, the audio effects that echo (or not) across the battlefields of *Ground Control II* are just as rich. Rumbles from heavy footsteps of a group of siege soldiers marching along or artillery fire landing home produce tangible bass, and every weapon, explosion and militant response can be picked out of the cacophony of battle.

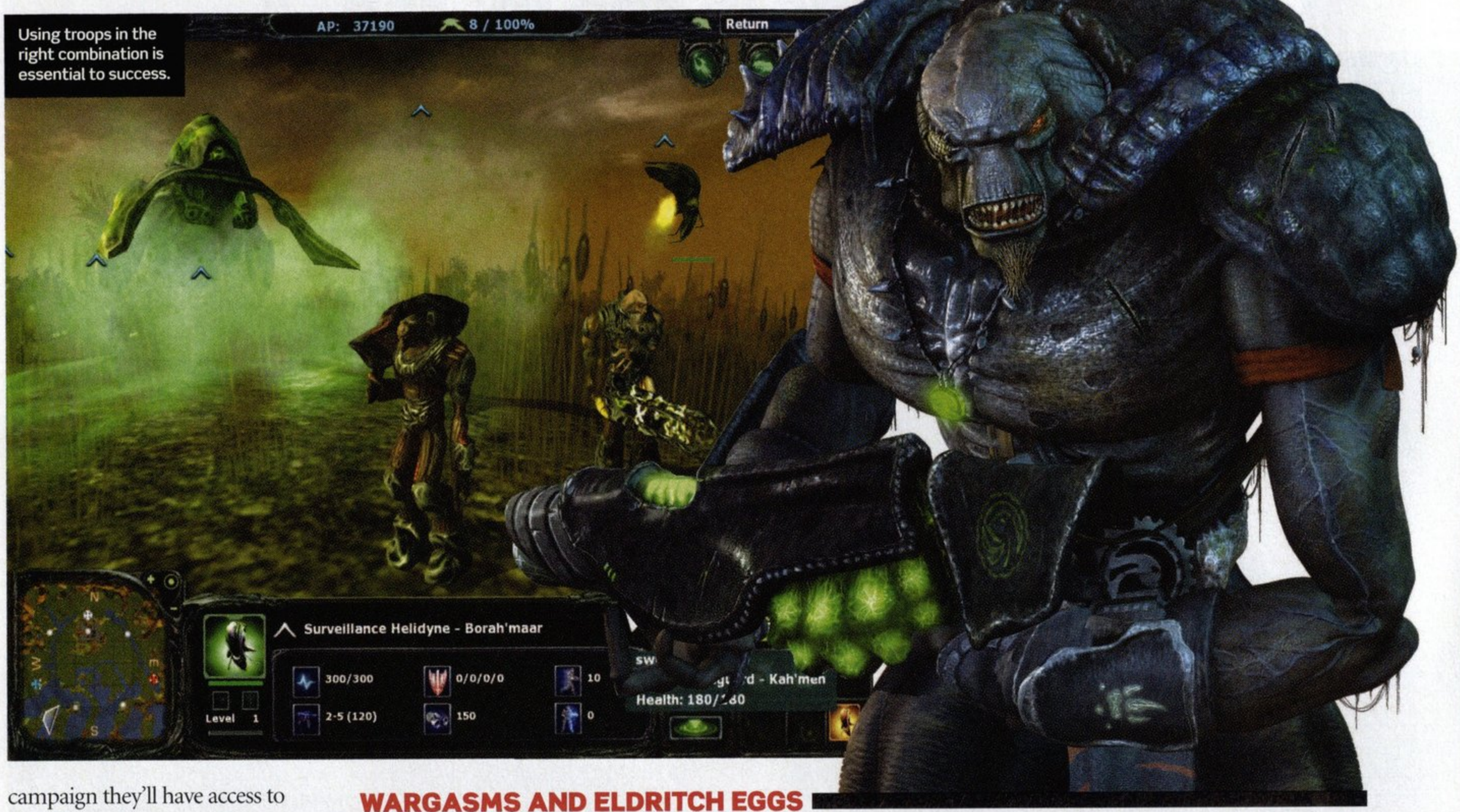
> The Viron vehicles all have a rather similar look

Having secondary modes for units is not new, but the way GCII revolves around this feature is rather unprecedented. Basic infantry for the NSA for example can switch between assault rifle and rocket launchers, one for infantry, the latter for vehicles and armoured targets. Every unit has some sort of power or feature that can make them extremely useful in a certain situation. Learning to recall what combination of units to send in, and what mode they need to be in for any given scenario is the key to mastering *GCII*.

Half-way through the game the Jacob starts being asked to lead Virons into battle. The Viron forces have all the equivalents of the NSA and then some, but their melding ability makes them a little more complicated to use. In most cases, two Viron units of a similar kind can meld into a single 'more powerful' unit. This melded form may have very different strengths and weaknesses, so it is fortunate that these units can 'unmeld' into their basic parts. It's both more fiddly and versatile than playing as the NSA. While practice makes anything easier, it should be noted that the Viron vehicles all have a rather similar look about them and are hard to memorise unless you have a head for blobby shapes.

Then again, why not give the player a little extra to learn? By the time they're in the Viron ▶

GROUND CONTROL 2



Using troops in the right combination is essential to success.

campaign they'll have access to everything *GCII* has to offer. Yes, even though the Terran Empire has unique 'Strider' (mech) units that every sci-fi fan would love to send into battle, there's no means to play as the imperials, even in multiplayer. Perhaps it would have been a cliché to include three or more races to play as, but the lack of variety is not something RTS fans are used to. More to the point, it would have been so simple for Massive to include the Terrans as a multiplayer race that it prompts the question, why not?

Speaking of multiplayer, Massive Entertainment has managed to both work wonders and miss things. Inclusion of a co-operative mode for the 24 single-player missions is welcome, but many missions require one player to give units to the other for them to actually become an active part of the game. The ability for a player to 'drop-in' to an ongoing multiplayer match is truly novel, but how often is this actually going to be welcomed? It's the kind of thing most players would want to agree on before entering a match. Yes, that's how wars are fought, and for situations where a handicap is needed, this can work well. However, because a player that controls many victory points is always going to be earning the most acquisitions points, it's always going to be a tough slog for any late comers. It does allow for some exotic scenarios with team-based matches. You may need to use the editor to make suitable arenas for such matches however, as the game ships with a pitiful ten multiplayer maps.

combines raw tactics with polished visuals

Ground Control II may not set the world afire in the way games like other strategy games such as *Warcraft III* have managed, but its achievements are undeniable. It combines raw tactics with polished visuals classily enough to make each encounter engaging enough to keep the player glued to their screen. The single-player campaign is varied and well balanced, with each mission genuinely feeling like part of a pleasing plot.

Most importantly, *Ground Controll II* is not a shameful case of comeliness at the cost of gameplay. The lack of building and depth of upgrade options only place more emphasis on a solid tactical approach to everything faced within the game.

DAN TOOSE

WARGASMS AND ELDRITCH EGGS

Are two Virons better than one?

Explaining the antics of an eldritch warrior race with an ovum-fixation.

1 Ahh, when Gru'lok met Horshaa... Our two hideously ugly Viron warriors hear nothing but some John Paul Young tune in the background, and are now at their most open to suggestion.

2 Bang! No phone number exchange, nothing, but a fertilised egg is all that's left of this union between big sweaty two aliens. It's shelf life – a mere 15 seconds. Enemies have the chance to scramble it while vulnerable.

3 Where once there were two, now there is but one, without ritual suicide of incoming artillery fire. A great party trick, but we don't advise that you try melding with your mates when drunk at social events...

PC GAMES ADDICT Sci-fi warfare without civil engineers

IT IS ›Fast paced ›Visually stunning ›Tactical

IT ISN'T ›Ultra-complicated ›Plotless ›Revolutionary

Striking

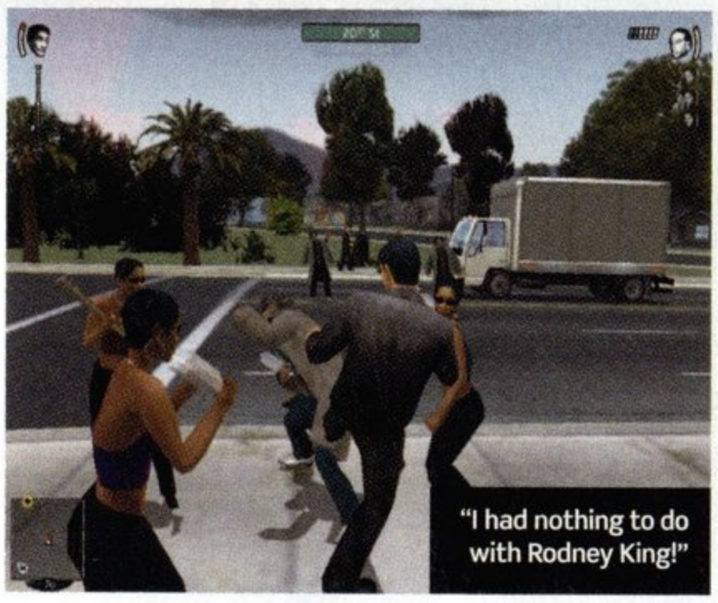
85%

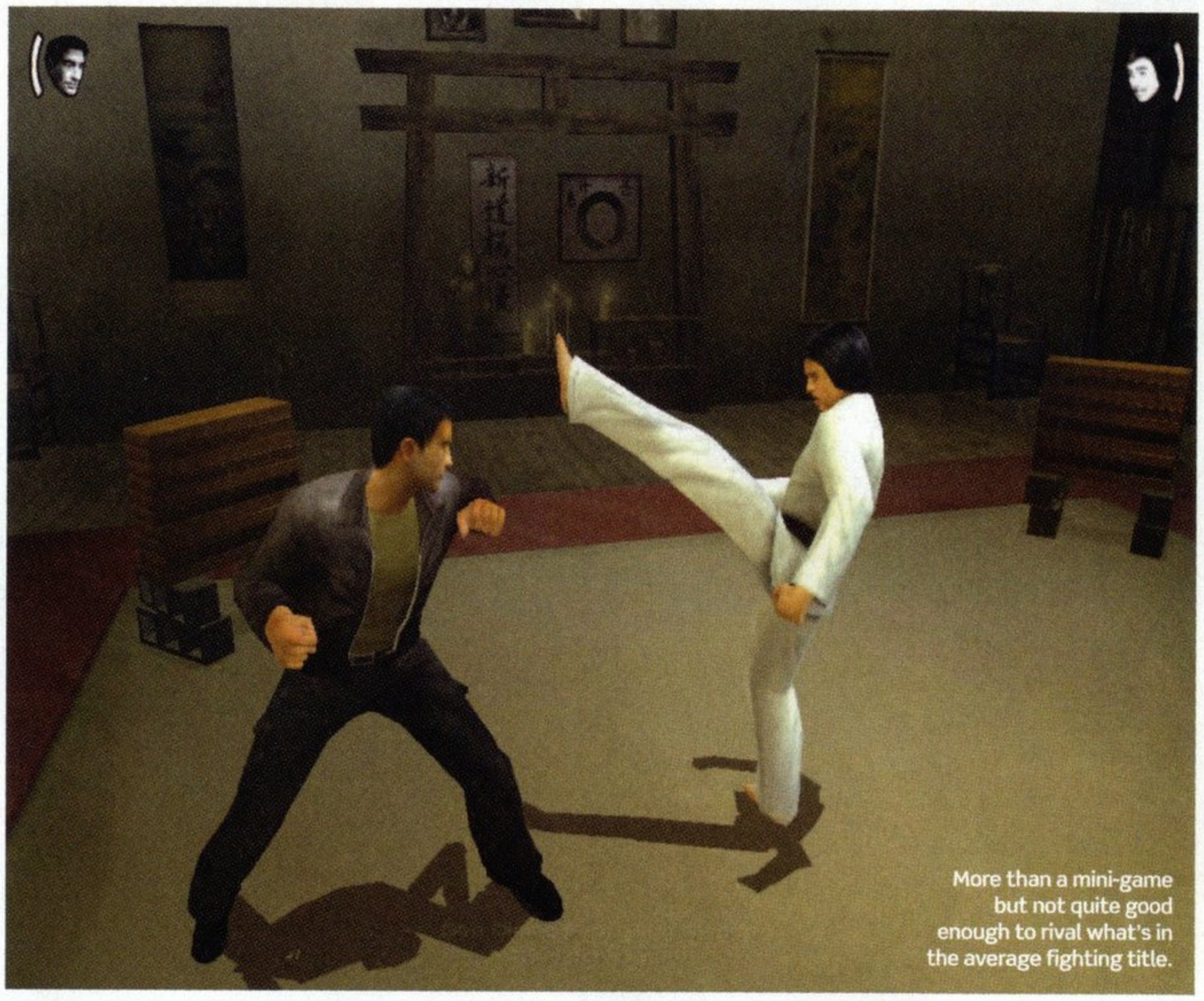
■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Vivendi Games ■ **Developer** Massive Entertainment ■ **They say** 1.5GHz CPU, 128Mb RAM, 3D card ■ **We say** 2GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 3D card ■ **Multiplayer** LAN, Internet, up to 8 players ■ **Link** www.groundcontrol2.com ■ **Community** http://forum.massive.se ■ **Influenced by** Ground Control ■ **Alternatively** Perimeter

TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF L.A.

Shameless clone or a game of its own?

Just the usual LA morning traffic fracas...





More than a mini-game but not quite good enough to rival what's in the average fighting title.

If only all detectives were like Nick Kang, crime would be right down. As for there being greater civil order and improved public safety… Well, Nick gets the bad guys right? *True Crime: Streets of LA*, Activision's vigilante cop game has graduated from console to PC, and we're in for a bigger bite of LA's underground than ever before. New multiplayer options and a decent resolution are welcome, but is this a game that's simply better suited to console gaming?

For the uninitiated, *True Crime* is essentially a variant of the *GTA* games, where instead of committing crimes, you're stopping them. Well, that's the theory, Nick Kang is a bit of a vigilante and he can be played as either good, bad cop or an enjoyable blend of the two. How you play the game determines which branches of the storyline you go down, providing a genuine reason to play through more than once.

What this boils down to is a combination of driving, shooting, fighting and hoofing it around an impressively large and accurate portrayal of Los Angeles. Working for the Elite Operations Division (EOD), Nick is sent out on missions ranging from investigating organised crime through to relatively simple routine patrols.

Gunplay involves Max Payne-like diving

Despite the controls feeling a little more sluggish on PC, getting Nick to do what you want in play is quite simple regardless where he is. Gunplay involves Max Payne like diving and pinpoint aiming that really shames *GTA*, while fighting is a very simple (and hammy) affair of kung-fu kicks, punches and throws. Out on the street things are more familiar, with the added ability to shake down suspects or slap on the cuffs. LA is a living breathing place, just like say, Vice City.

The one area where *True Crime* genuinely improves on the *GTA* games that it pays tribute to is character development. On top of the whole good cop/bad cop thing, the player can work Nick to their liking by improving his driving, shooting and fighting capabilities. It's good to have the game mechanics evolve a bit when the same basic actions are repeated so often.

In fairness to Luxoflux, trying to create new features for a game that most gamers have already made their mind up on is a really tall order. With that in mind, we find their attempts to work in multiplayer features into *True Crime* to be admirable, but whether or not it's something any PC gamer will want to play is another matter. The five multiplayer modes feel more like an assortment of polished mini-games than something anyone will want to time on.

Expanding the soundtrack of *True Crime* is a welcome improvement for those not partial to the hip-hop themed soundtrack of the console builds, a slew of metal and rock coming into the mix.

With a star-studded voice acting cast, loads of high speed action and humour worked in throughout, *True Crime* has plenty going for it. Just be aware that it doesn't take long to complete and its multiplayer modes just don't warrant a revisit for anyone who has already played it.

DAN TOOSE

PC GAMES ADDICT Good cop, bad cop meets *GTA* in LA

IT'S › Funny › Visually stunning › Tactical

IT'S NOT › Really made for PC › *GTA* › Awesome multiplayer

Arresting

77%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Activision ■ **Developer** Luxoflux ■ **They say** PIII 800, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card with T&L ■ **We say** P4 2GHz, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card with T&L ■ **Multiplayer** LAN, Internet, up to 4 ■ **Link** www.truecrimela.com ■ **Influenced by** GTA III ■ **Alternatively** Mafia: The City of Lost Heaven

POW!*

* POW! only available at level 12.

Review

CITY OF HEROES

Where there's always a queue for the phone box

The Scrapper character class can choose to specialise in martial arts. Carjackers beware!

An icy bolt slows this zombie down. That'll put a crimp on his brain-munching ways.

Thumbnail Review

It's a MMOG sans nonsense... besides superheroes!

- ☑ Bust goons
- ☑ Learn to fly
- ☑ Form your own superteam
- ☒ Fear kryptonite

Roam around a huge futuristic city, righting wrongs and saving the day. Capital.

Press-releases for upcoming games are the bane of every games journalist's life. We've lost count of the sheer number of publishers that spam you with blandisms such as "All-new design!", "Some ground-breaking graphics!" or "Never-before-seen gameplay elements!" (I have a nurtured loathing for that one). It's dross on an industrial scale, and it's our job to strip away this choddy bark and find the meat beneath.

Yet, wouldn't you know it, the most accurate phrase I can think up to describe *City of Heroes* is "Empowering the gamer!" Do you see the irony? I've spent my life personally and professionally reviling such pump statements. Have I finally become the thing I hate?

Not yet. Because this game *does* empower players, like no other. You get to both design and play a superhero, and fight crime with fists, firearms and flames.

> All you need to play at being Stan Lee

In the business district, a cyclopian hero freezes a thug with a stream of magical ice, then delivers a sucker-punch that sends him flying 20 meters through the air. An amazonian superwoman hovers six feet above Skid Row, frazzling a gang with a rain of lightning bolts. In the industrial sector, a vast, lumpen, rock-skinned hero pounds a drug-pusher with steam-hammer blows: *blam-blam-blam!*

WHERE IS IT? *CoH* isn't available in stores here yet, but a few Australian online retailers stock it.

Just picture the kind of hero you want to be, and you can make it happen. The character-creation system is so rich and flexible, you can do anything you want. If you've a hankering for a gas-masked man of mystery in a purple spotty suit and trilby, it's perfectly possible to build one. The near-limitless bodily permutations, combined with a natty colouring tool, give you all you need to play at being Stan Lee. But unsurprisingly, it's not the ▶

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

Paragon City: a whistle-stop tour

Help the helpless, punish the evil, then stop for a skinny latte

Fighting thugs in the run-down streets of King's Row. Sarcastic comments thoughtfully provided by the citizen that I'M TRYING TO SAVE. You're next, pal.

Even in relatively upmarket areas, such as the city-central district of Atlas Park, a superhero can find some prime gang-bashing opportunities.

And when the working day is done, why not pop to the local seedy cinema, and unwind with some low-grade smut? Hurrah for Paragon City – there's something for everyone. ▶

CITY OF HEROES

Very, very, *very* low-level flying demonstrated.

ridiculously outlandish heroes that look best: it's the ones that are designed around a concept. You can mix and match to your heart's content, but themed design wins over hodge-podge heroes every time, as you'll discover when you meet other heroes in the game. Therein lies the lasting appeal.

Heroes fall into five different optional 'archetypes' – essentially character classes – which define their basic attack types and physical attributes. Blasters are long-range fighters, for example, whereas tankers make good front-row sluggers. You must also decide upon your hero's origin: natural, magical, technological, science or mutant. Origin dictates the actual skill-paths open to a hero; magical blasters, for example, have access to fireballs, ice-bolts and the like, whereas technology blasters get whacking great assault rifles. In short, you really can choose to fight in any way you see fit – close combat, ranged, support, or a combination thereof – without tying yourself to a common-looking character class. No identical hordes of elven archers here. In Paragon City, individuality breeds contentment.

The major difference between *City of Heroes* and every other MMOG, however, is that there's just no fuss. There are no stats, no tradeskills, no money to be made. It's about being a superhero, and teaming up with other superheroes to bash the bad guys and save the day. It's undiluted by many of the deeper elements common to MMOGs. It's about the thrill of combat and learning to fly, all of which is openly and honestly refreshing. The only conventional RPG elements on show are the fact that you rise through the levels as you gain combat experience, and you enhance your skills and learn new ones as you level up. There's a spot of trading involved, as you can trade skill enhancements (which are awarded in combat and bought from NPC heroes), inspirations (one-shot buffs) and experience points with other heroes. But that's about it.

The game is set across the vastness of Paragon City, a crime-riddled near-future metropolis. The areas you inhabit when you start out are clean and attractive: all bright stonework, civic fountains and shining towerblocks. As you level up and travel further afield, however, you begin to encounter some of the less salubrious districts – downtown tenements, smog-choked industrial estates, neglected precincts infested with gangers, whores and soapbox preachers

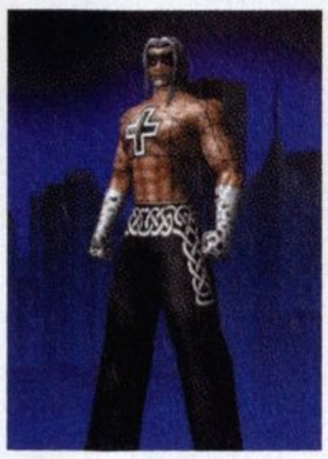
EMBEDDED JOURNALISTS

City of hacks

What are the PC GAMES ADDICT team's alter-egos? We set them loose on *CoH*...

Al becomes: Lovebomb! With a warcry of "Kissy kissy!", she literally loves her foes to death. Ice magic is her speciality.

Tim becomes: Hank In Black! Like a tiny little colossus, his diminutive stature belies his enormous strength.



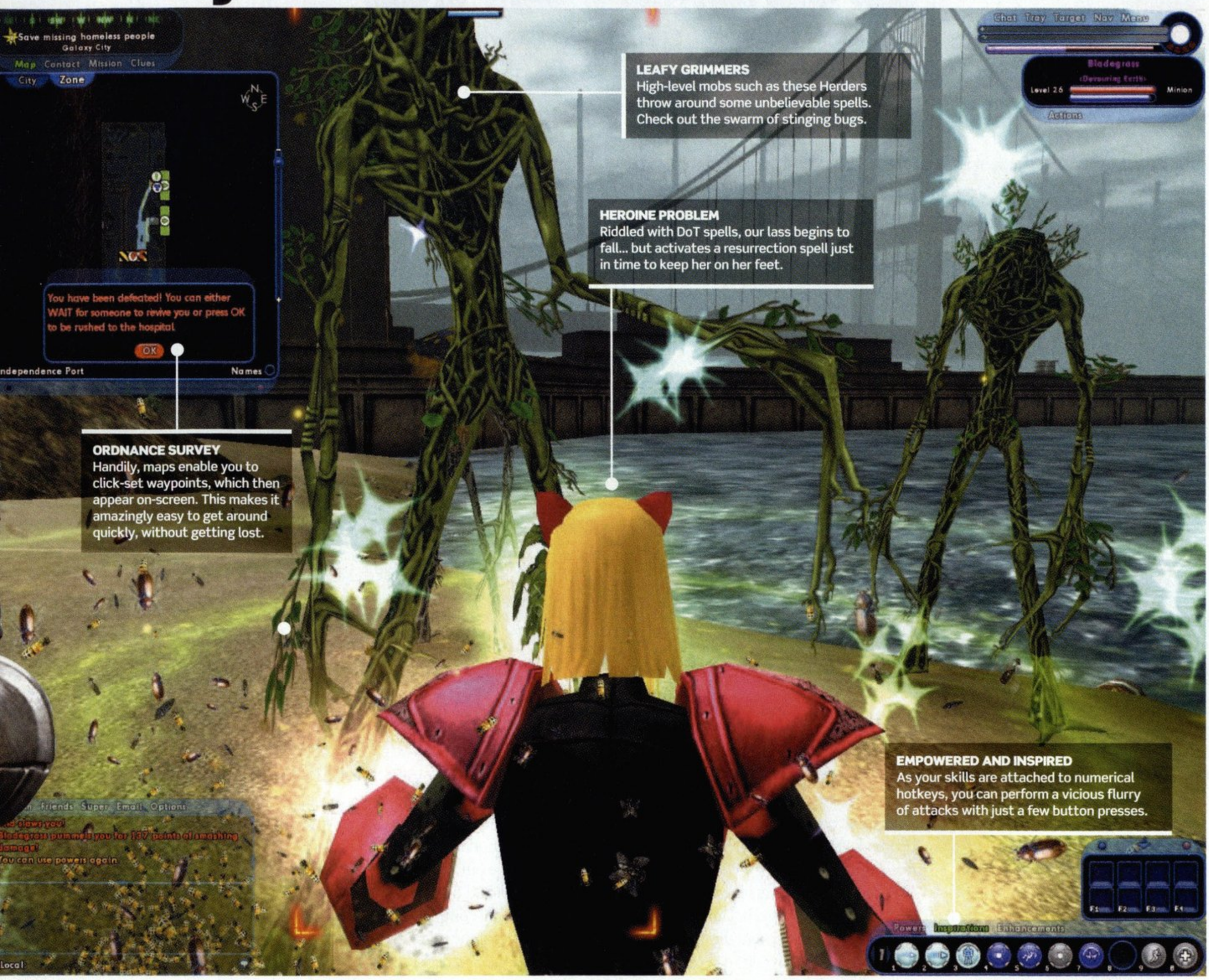
Craig becomes: Personal Jesus! This is what happens when a mere staff writer gets delusions of godhood...

Sam (our work experience victim) becomes: Wasp Woman! Yellow and black, with a sting in her back. Side.

Ross becomes: The Crimson Killbot! To be honest, only he could afford the overpriced cybernetic implants.

SEA HERE

"They came from under the sea..."



LEAFY GRIMMERS
High-level mobs such as these Herders throw around some unbelievable spells. Check out the swarm of stinging bugs.

HEROINE PROBLEM
Riddled with DoT spells, our lass begins to fall... but activates a resurrection spell just in time to keep her on her feet.

ORDNANCE SURVEY
Handily, maps enable you to click-set waypoints, which then appear on-screen. This makes it amazingly easy to get around quickly, without getting lost.

EMPOWERED AND INSPIRED
As your skills are attached to numerical hotkeys, you can perform a vicious flurry of attacks with just a few button presses.

selling salvation for a dollar a pop on the street corners. It's beautiful and huge and convincing, and it will draw you in like a fish on a line.

Much of your time is spent meeting contacts, then carrying out missions for them. These come in various flavours, but mostly involve smacking goons around. And in fact, this is perhaps the weakest aspect of the game – the missions are just a bit too repetitive, and the inevitable element of grind creeps in. The way to keep this at bay, is to team up with other superheroes and fight with them. Cutting through swathes of enemies with a bunch of flashy superheroes at your side is a blast. And while teamwork is a crucial element, there's also a healthy sense of competition, due to the essential nature of individual characterisation. You *want* your hero to be noticed, through looks and deeds. And you just know that everyone else feels the same way, champing at the bit to make their mark. There's no greater spur to combat success. And when you lose yourself in that experience for a couple of hours, it becomes easy to forget about the mechanical process of levelling.

It's beautiful and huge and convincing

The problem with most MMOGs is that they don't cater to gamers with limited playtime on their hands – there's just too much to do. This isn't true of *City of Heroes*. You can log on for an hour, tackle a mission, log off again and – crucially – feel like you've actually *achieved* something. Moreover, as the game lacks the deeper elements of MMO gaming, there is a lot less stuff clamouring for your attention.

City of Heroes is action-packed, and it's all about having fun with other people, not to mention showing off with the funkiest, most spandex-clad avatar you can dream up. Does "Empowering the gamer" make a bit more sense now? I hope so. Otherwise, it's off to the Electronic Arts press office for me, with a letter of introduction clutched in my hand. *Shiver.*

AL BICKHAM

PC GAMES ADDICT A MMOG with comic-book panache

IT'S › Huge › Heavy on the hitting › Quite gorgeous

IT'S NOT › A standard MMOG › A life-hoover › Run of the mill

Superfly

84%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** NCSoft ■ **Developer** Cryptic Studios ■ **They say** PIII 800, 256Mb RAM, GeForce 2/Radeon 8500 ■ **We say** P4 2GHz, 512Mb RAM, GeForce 4/Radeon 960
■ **Multiplayer** Online only ■ **Link** www.cityofheroes.com ■ **Community** https://boards.cityofheroes.com/ubbthreads.php ■ **Influenced by** Comic-book superheroes ■ **Alternatively** Freedom Force

SOLDIERS
HEROES OF WORLD WAR II

Like pushing toy tanks across the carpet, but with a lot more blood...

Thumbnail Review

It's WWII strategy with more control than ever before

- ☑ Tense tank battles
- ☑ Explosive level of detail
- ☑ Non-linear solutions to objectives
- ☒ Potato peeling

Despite its gruelling difficulty, the freedom to experiment will keep you coming back for another crack. Only for the dedicated.

There is such a glut of World War II games on the market these days that it is quickly becoming cliché for game reviews to start off with a complaint about the glut of World War II games on the market. Er, moving right along then…

Soldiers: Heroes of World War II might use an all-too familiar setting, but it does bring to the table a few genuinely novel ideas in an attempt to revitalise the real-time strategy genre. This time you're not only commanding multiple units from on high, but directly controlling their individual actions at any one time. Babysitting your tools of destruction has just been taken to an all-new level of fiddly interaction.

Amusingly, the press release that comes with Soldiers proclaims "This is no puzzle game where the 'save' key is everything", when in actuality you will be saving almost every step of the way as you frantically attempt to crack your mission objectives. It's as baffling a quote as id Software trying to convince people *Doom 3* isn't a shooter set in a series of corridors. This is very much a puzzle-oriented game (okay, we'll call it problem-solving if it makes Codemasters feel better), because an enormous amount of trial and error is required to figure out how best to navigate each level and thwart the enemy AI, whilst still completing the specific tasks that the missions set out for you. One bad decision can result in everything going pear-shaped, so yes, the save key really is everything.

Frustration can stem from the sometimes awkward balance between implementing your overall strategy and using the innovative Direct Control function. You have the ability to take direct control of any of your units, from a fully manned tank to individual soldiers. When under your control, you are actually controlling their direct actions, from reloading weapons, to choosing a target and pulling the trigger. Whilst this gives the player a satisfying amount of accurate control, it means your attention is continuously diverted away from the overall strategic picture and your other units become left to the whims of the sometimes erratic AI.

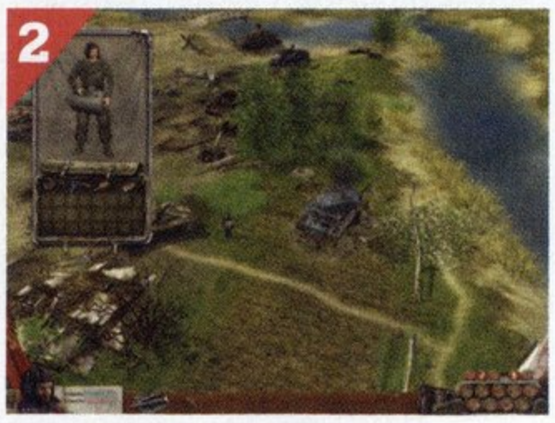
The problems can be

FLEXIBLE MECHANICS

The spoils of war

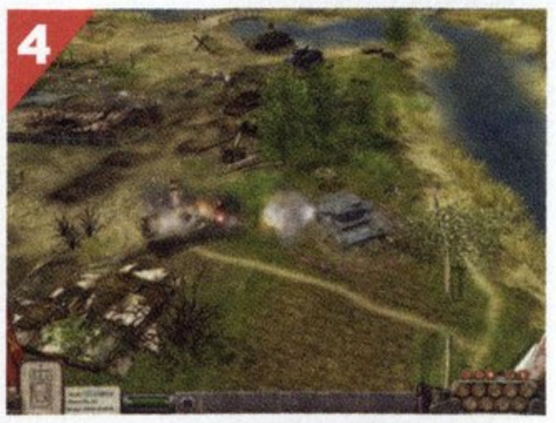
Turn the tide of a battle by using your enemy's own weapons against them

Killed the occupants of that disabled enemy tank? Then what are you waiting for? That's good hardware, put it to good use!



If you must, eject a soldier from your own unit and get him to carry a repair kit over to the damaged tank you want to fix up.

After a few moments, the enemy tank will be back in full working order, so pop your soldier inside and make off with it!



Find some extra crew to make it more efficient if you can. Otherwise, enjoy your stolen firepower!

TAKEN APART

The devil is in the detail

PICKPOCKET Dead bodies aren't totally useless; you could send a soldier out to search these for extra ammunition.
ACCIDENT PRONE You can order soldiers to crouch or go prone on the ground in an attempt to stay out of crossfire.
DUCK FOR COVER Tank shells can cause heavy damage to the environment, deforming the terrain with nasty craters and charred pot holes.
WATCH YOUR REAR Tank armour is heavier on the front, so try to stay facing your enemy or they'll penetrate your weaker sides.
SITTING DUCK: A damaged German tank has been abandoned but is still in decent shape. Get a soldier to hi-jack it!
Fuel: 130.8

compounded somewhat by just how fiddly your interaction becomes. If your vehicle is low on fuel, you need to take direct control of a soldier, open up his inventory and equip him with a fuel canister, and then move him across the map to find somewhere to siphon petrol from, take it back to your momentarily stranded set of treads and refill the tank. Sadly, it's sometimes easier to abandon units and allow them to be destroyed, just so you can concentrate on getting more important tasks finished.

If the AI was more competent when left to its own devices, executing your tactics wouldn't be such a headache. However there are a number of AI and pathfinding flaws. There are occasions when AI-controlled soldiers set to Fire at Will remain oblivious to enemy units spraying them with bullets, and your tanks will sometimes plough through your other vehicles and obliterate them in their eagerness to make it to wherever you've clicked on the map.

Soliders' interface is also somewhat unintuitive, with the mini-map, objectives pop-up and unit toolbar a jumble of left and right mouse-clicks that never respond the way you expect them to. Visual problems with the inventory also result in dragging and dropping items not updating until you close the inventory and re-open it to see that the items did indeed move as you instructed. Basically, there's a whole level of polish and functionality that is lacking here.

The good news is that each level is like a giant sandbox to play in. Directly controlling units is a lot of fun when you're in a position to blow apart buildings in spectacular fashion or stealthily sneak soldiers through enemy defenses undetected. The level of detail in the action is exceptional thanks to some attractive graphics and impressive physics. Tank rounds will shake trees, deform the terrain or blast less-armoured vehicles into any number of small parts. The amount of space you have to work in also allows for a wide variety of different tactics and a great deal of experimentation with individual units. If storming a barricade with a tank doesn't seem to work, then maybe sneaking a sniper through some bushes to pick off the enemy soldiers manning the gun turrets will.

The overwhelming difficulty that you sometimes feel up against in each mission is overcome by how flexible the game mechanics are, constantly tempting you to come back to the game to try a different approach after abandoning it in frustration. It can be multi-tasking trial and error hell, but there's enough depth and impressive detail in *Soldiers* to reward those gamers who are up for the challenge.

ELIOT FISH

PC GAMES ADDICT — Tiring but rewarding hands-on strategy

IT'S ›Realistically detailed ›Overly difficult ›Kinetic

IT'S NOT ›User friendly ›Bug free ›Intuitive

Toilsome

80%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Codemasters ■ **Developer** Best Way Company ■ **They say** PIII 1GHz, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb video card ■ **We say** PIV 2GHz, 512Mb RAM, 128Mb video card
■ **Multiplayer** LAN, Internet, up to 16 ■ **Link** www.codemasters.com/soldiers ■ **Community** www.esaclan.net ■ **Influenced by** Commandos and WWII-mania ■ **Alternatively** *Silent Storm, Perimeter*

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP RUGBY

Computer game rugby? About as convincing as a Dutch prop

Digging the ball out of a scrum. Or possibly a ruck.

"He's different! Quick - beat him to death!"

Another confusing ruck situation. It's easy to get away with crafty goosing.

Six months too late, lads. The dupe plant should have been churning these out prior to the moment where that damned Jonny's fateful drop-goal tumbled through the our posts like an oval dagger plunging into our hearts. Beefy minions lining the streets during the competition parade could have been far more easily enticed into parting with ã fistful of dollars for a computer game at that point of time than any other.

Marketing sloppiness aside, *WCR* is probably about as good as simulated rugby could get without inventing some kind of all-over motion-detection suit. Along with the mugs and hats and duvet covers, an 'Official Game' was pretty inevitable. But, can-do doesn't necessarily mean should. As Swordfish's previous game *Jonah Lomu Rugby* showed, maybe rugby is just a little bit too convoluted to be entirely PC compatible.

There's a good blend of game set-up options, with the usual Friendly and Competition (rack up a big World Championship or recreate real and imaginary tours and cups). Challenge Mode is best, though – you can re-bustle your way through crucial points in historic games ('Classic'), take on a crazy-skilled dream-team ('All-Stars') and try to elbow aside as many consecutive challengers as possible ('Survival'). All is customisable – weather, stadium, etc, and, judging by the shabby presentation, it's easy – well, charitable – to say that all the effort has been concentrated on sharpening up the game.

About as good as simulated rugby can get

And it has. Sort of. Swordfish have done their best to keep the control system intuitive, but it's like trying to shove an oyster through the eye of a needle. Rugby is inherently a fluid and flailing business, and it easily resists the kind of modulation required to make it work well as a PC game. Everything is siphoned through a system of 'Action' buttons. '1' is punt kick, '2' is driving tackle, '3' is drop-goal, '4' is, er... It isn't easy to remember what does what when a large man is rapidly approaching, bent on splintering some tibia.

Still, the games themselves are convincing, the tackles have plenty of 'Oof!' factor, and it's hard to beat the tactical vindication of finally thumping down your first try, after much button-hammering.

The graphics are mushy and the players look a bit nightmarish in the phizog department, but at least they canter around the pitch with plenty of physical presence.

One more thing. I know that criticising the commentary in sports games is a bit like laughing at children's fridge-paintings, but Stuart Barnes' punditry is as chronically pause-ridden as a gun-to-head hostage video monologue.

Perhaps the fact that Australia recently ground the World Cup winners into the ground may make this a a good time for a Rugby title to land on the shelves here in Australia. Especially so for our countrymen that are stinging for a decent sports game that our nation excels at. This may not have all the spit and polish of a soccer-sim or one of EA's US-based sports titles, but it's admirable for a sports game with a relatively small following.

ANDY LOWE

PC GAMES ADDICT Pretty good, but for rugby zealots only

IT'S › Rugby › Fun to play › A bit fiddly

IT'S NOT › Accessible › Essential › For pansies

Passable

72%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Acclaim ■ **Developer** Swordfish Studios ■ **They say** PIII, 128Mb RAM, 3D card ■ **We say** PIII, 512Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card
■ **Multiplayer** Two-player, multiplayer league ■ **Link** www.worldchampionshiprugby.com ■ **Influenced by** Private school brutality, 2003 and all that. ■ **Alternatively** Pro Rugby Manager 2004

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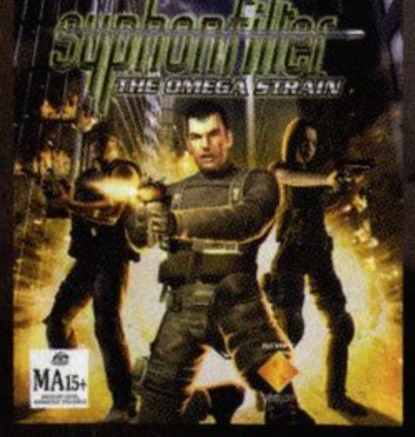

The Omega Strain has been released.

Calling all agents. You are needed to stop bio-terrorists unleashing this deadly virus. Fight single-handed or team up online to avert a global disaster. www.omega-strain.com

Don't let it spread.

BONUS OFFER

NETWORK ADAPTOR* & HARDWARE: ONLINE ARENA GAME WITH EVERY PURCHASE

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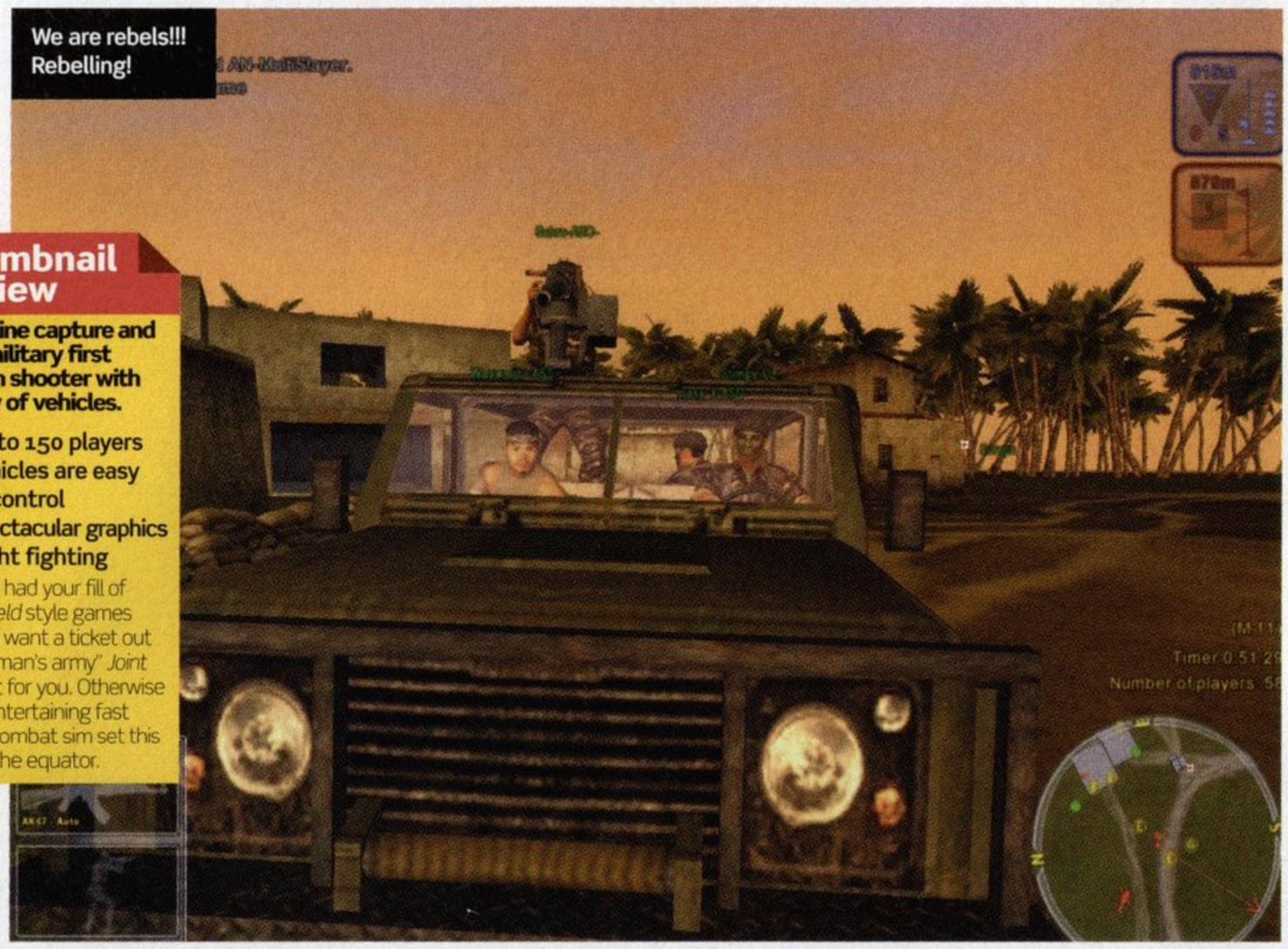
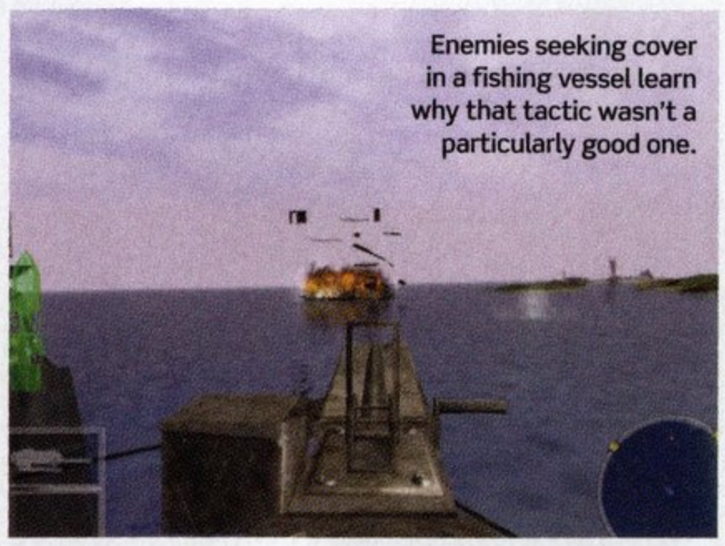
AVAILABLE AT ALL PARTICIPATING RETAILERS

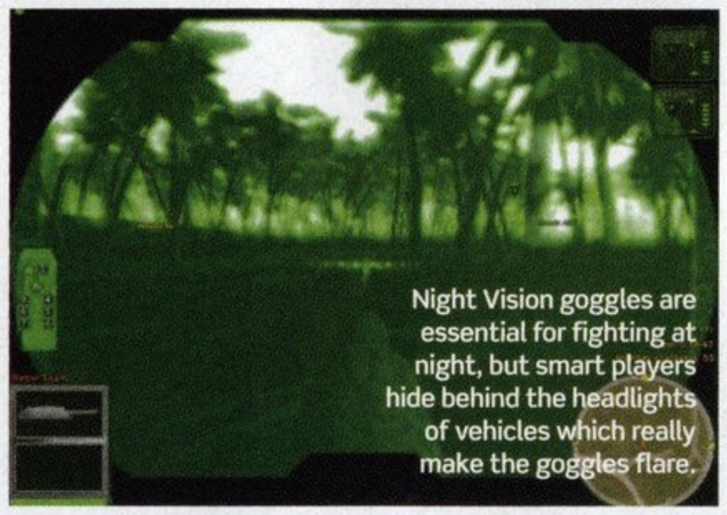
PlayStation.2

JOINT OPERATIONS TYPHOON RISING

Somewhere along my video game travels I was drafted!




Enemies seeking cover in a fishing vessel learn why that tactic wasn't a particularly good one.


Night Vision goggles are essential for fighting at night, but smart players hide behind the headlights of vehicles which really make the goggles flare.

Thumbnail Review

An online capture and hold military first person shooter with plenty of vehicles.

- ☑ Up to 150 players
- ☑ Vehicles are easy to control
- ☑ Spectacular graphics
- ☑ Night fighting

If you've had your fill of *Battlefield* style games and just want a ticket out of "this man's army" *Joint Ops* isn't for you. Otherwise it's an entertaining fast paced combat sim set this side of the equator.

War! What is it good for? Well apparently it's pretty handy for the online FPS market that continually pumps out military shooters with gusto. From WWII to the smallest modern skirmish we are re-enacting battles almost as fast as they're happening. Yet despite this very crowded market, *Joint Operations* can stand proud with an advanced graphics engine that allows for up to 150 players, 75 a side to fight it out.

Like *Battlefield 1942*, *Joint Operations* is an online only FPS with no single-player campaign other than a series of training missions that prepare you for the online world. This is a real shame because the graphics engine and gameplay of *Joint Ops* would make a great game for bot-matching.

Typical of the current crop of online shooters, *Joint Operations* uses the capture and hold stye of gameplay to achieve victory. This involves players having to stand within 50m of a control point to capture it, and if the enemy kills the point's defenders, they can claim it for themselves.

The action is set in the jungles of Indonesia with a fictitious story line that has the *Joint Operations* team battling rebels intent on overthrowing the Indonesian government. You even fight around a series of islands known as Timor, although real world history tells us that East Timor's independence involved the eradication of violent rebels who were pro-Indonesian but whatever the slant, it's the battles that matter.

And what battles they are! Utilising modern military equipment there's an abundance of Humvees, armoured personal carriers (APCs), and an array of choppers including the UH 60 Blackhawk and Russian MI-8 with their side mounted mini guns. In the hands of the right player these vehicles rain death from above. The stars of the show are the CH-47 Chinook and its Russian equivalent the MI-26 HALO. These massive aircraft allow for two vehicles to be loaded inside and transported to

I NEED AIR SUPPORT!

Chinooks: Load em up, fly em out.

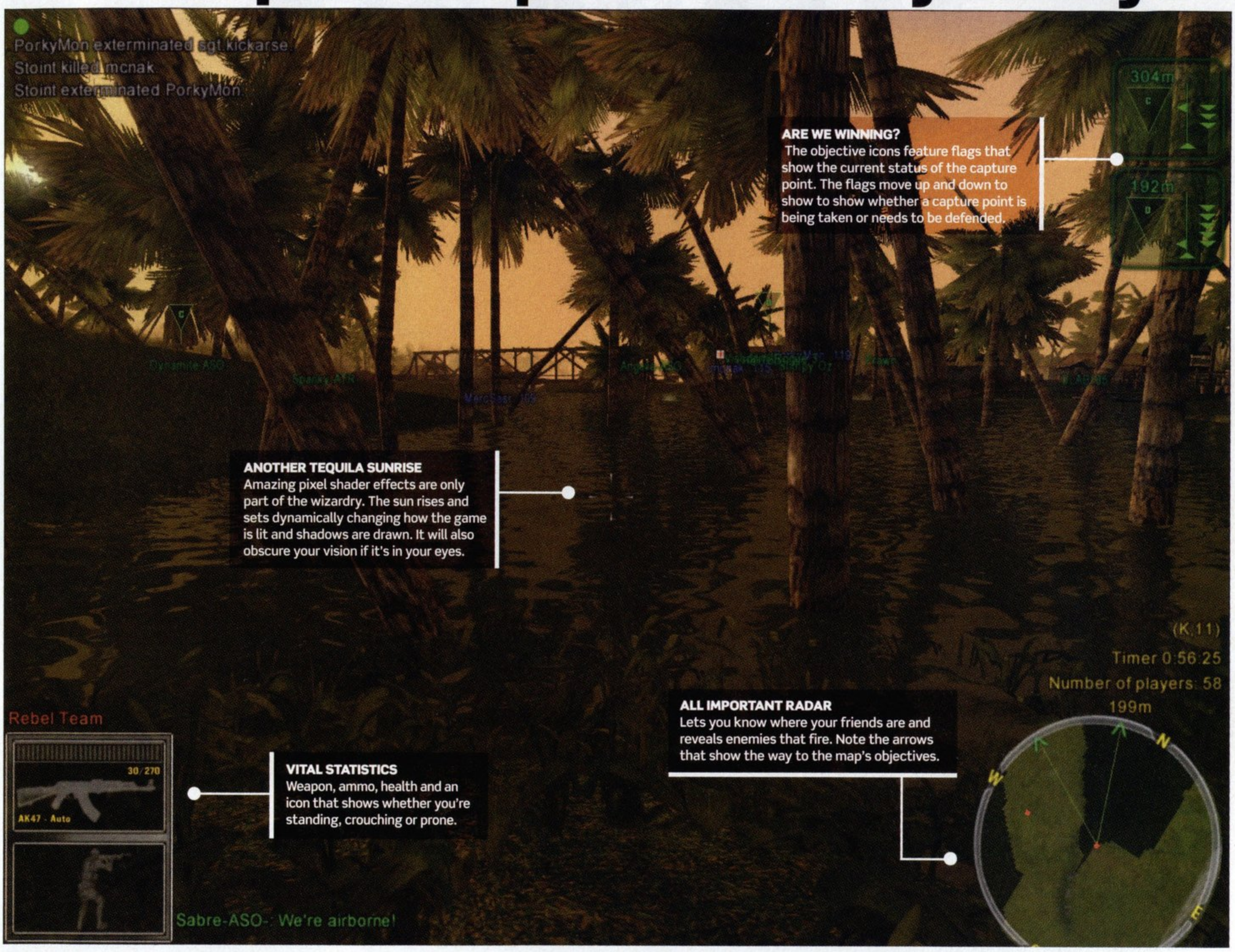
The big choppers in Joint Ops are truly huge, and able to carry up to two vehicles

Getting a vehicle into a chopper is as easy as driving inside it. The pilot can then take you to a destination and once set down, just drive on out.

This is an example of a small vehicle entering a Chinook, but both this whirlybird and the Russian MI-26 can carry two vehicles into battle

Tada! Here's our vehicle inside the Chinook ready for take off. In battle most players just stay in their vehicle and drive out when you land – that's some nice code Novalogic.

"A tropical hotspot to see out your days"


PorkyMon exterminated sgt kickarse
Stoint killed mcnak
Stoint exterminated PorkyMon
304m
192m
ARE WE WINNING?
The objective icons feature flags that show the current status of the capture point. The flags move up and down to show to show whether a capture point is being taken or needs to be defended.
ANOTHER TEQUILA SUNRISE
Amazing pixel shader effects are only part of the wizardry. The sun rises and sets dynamically changing how the game is lit and shadows are drawn. It will also obscure your vision if it's in your eyes.
(K,11)
Timer 0:56:25
Number of players: 58
199m
ALL IMPORTANT RADAR
Lets you know where your friends are and reveals enemies that fire. Note the arrows that show the way to the map's objectives.
Rebel Team
30/270
AK47 - Auto
VITAL STATISTICS
Weapon, ammo, health and an icon that shows whether you're standing, crouching or prone.
Sabre-ASO- We're airborne!

whatever destination the pilot chooses. Joint Ops is the first game where being a chopper pilot is fun and it's a real adrenal rush to set down a Chinook near a capture point, dust blowing up from the rotors, and watch two Humvees full of players roll out before taking off to get the next batch of troops.

Unlike other games though there will probably be a fresh load of players to pick up because the maps are huge, encouraging others to wait for support. Heli pick up and drop off operations also succeed because your bird isn't made of papier-mâché and you're only going to be brought down by a surface to air missile as arms fire will do only minimal damage. The windscreen can be damaged though with bullet-hole textures that can make visibility an issue.

As Indonesia is an archipelago there are also plenty of naval battles involving fast patrol boats and large vehicle-carrying hover craft. In fact there are really no slow vehicles in Joint Ops and everything moves along at a zippy pace - even standard running is a lot faster than most other games of the ilk. A slight drawback of all this speed though is that you need a powerful machine just to run 1024x768 at medium settings and the screenshots shown could only be taken with an ATi AX800XT.

The standard classes are offered including soldiers, heavy gunners, medics and engineers that specialise in detonating claymores and mortars. Bombardment can be targeted with pinpoint accuracy; players select a mortar, bringing up a map and clicking on a location. Other players can also designate areas and targets for the engineer to shell.

Keep in mind that Joint Ops is a multiplayer only game which is an issue in this country. Due to how Joint Ops was programmed its server can't be run from a command console, a major issue for large ISPs that run gaming server farms. Thus there is no Telstra GameArena server to foster a community. This isn't total death though as there are two Australian servers and one NZ server that supports a maximum of 64 players.

There are also a number of Californian servers with pings of around 179 (on broadband) that support 150 players and are active at convenient times. With that many players, network latency becomes far less an issue than maintaining a frame rate above 20. Besides, the network code is good enough that you can play on any server with a ping under 200 with no real discernible lag. Ultimately, *Joint Ops* is what *Battlefield Vietnam* should have been, but in this country it faces issues with server availability and the need for a very powerful machine for games with more than 64 players.

JERE LAWRENCE

PC GAMES ADDICT What *BF: Vietnam* should have been

IT'S ›Fast ›Massive ›Easy to control

IT'S NOT ›Ugly ›Original ›Smooth on a dated PC

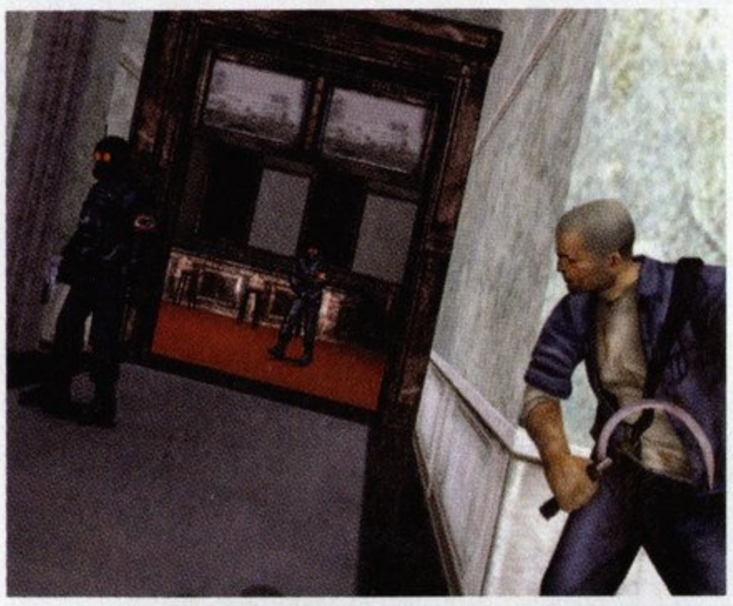
Gregarious

84%

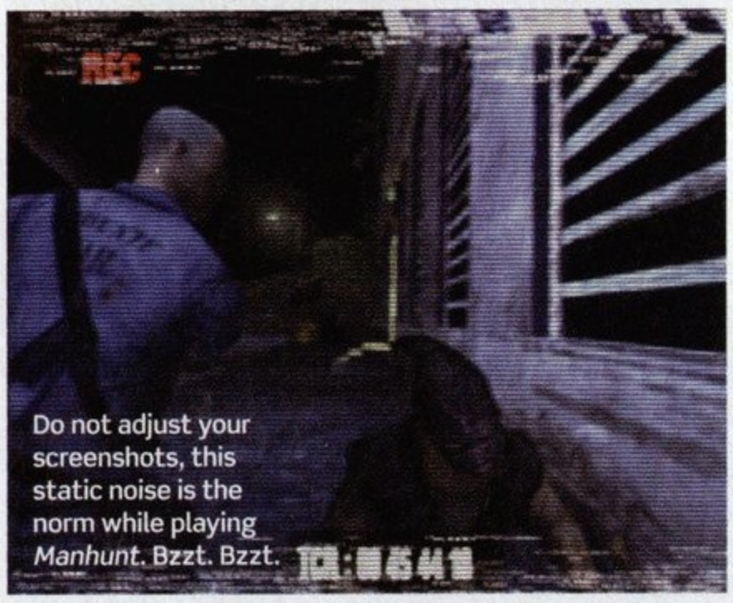
■ **Release** Out Now ■ **Publisher** EA ■ **Developer** Novalogic ■ **They say** PIII 1.2GHz, 256MB memory, 64MB 3D card ■ **We say** P4 2.4GHz, 512MB RAM, 128MB 3D card
■ **Multiplayer** Online only ■ **Link** www.novalogic.com ■ **Community** www.novaworld.com/NWCommunities/ ■ **Influenced by** The *Battlefield* series and its mods ■ **Alternatively** *Battlefield Vietnam*

MANHUNT

Attention Senator Harradine! Here's another chance to get on the news.



"Nope, no field of grass to attack around that corner..."



Do not adjust your screenshots, this static noise is the norm while playing *Manhunt*. Bzzt. Bzzt.

"It's a real shame that tattoo artist only knew how to spell one word."

Here we get to step inside everybody's favourite urban legend – the snuff movie. Set in the fanciful Carcer City, the winds of change have turned this once thriving industrial town into something out of a heavy metal music video. Amidst the rust and detritus lurk comically themed gangs of killers, paid by an enigmatic producer to hunt a single opponent. That running man is you, John Wayne Cash. Sentenced to death, you've been spared the indignity of lethal injection to face the greater indignity of being pursued by gang-bangers who like to dress up as clowns.

First appearing last year on PS2, and later on Xbox, *Manhunt* met with some mixed reviews. Through the haze of induced video static, the grit and the grime, and the extraordinarily brutal one-hit-kills, it was conceded that *Manhunt* was essentially an above-average stealth action game. Somewhere between *Tenchu* and *Grand Theft Auto* (and using the engine of the latter), it seemed more designed to induce media hysteria than gamer acclaim.

These condensed traits of affected malice remain. The narrator, your mysterious benefactor Starkweather, still hisses instructions into Cash's ear-piece, getting hot and sweaty whenever you make a kill. Striking someone unawares still bestows instant death; the longer you hold down the mouse button, the more gruesome the slaying. Sound plays a huge role, particularly with curious and malevolent AI opponents lurking about. Often a silent kill from an asphyxiating plastic bag is preferable to the crack of baseball bat against a cranium.

the whole thing only works if you can suspend disbelief

Why, even the standard trappings of console ports are still here: save points, limited save slots, garishly illuminated weapons and items. The biggest concession to PC power is the mouse/keyboard interface, which proves a far more surgical means of dispatching middle-America's most detestable scum. The only other noticeable difference is the ability to scale up the resolution, but given the blocky environments and artificially grainy visuals, this isn't a huge improvement.

As to *Manhunt's* strengths, atmosphere and variety still count for something. Players are advised to employ the same strategy as in watching movies like The Grudge: play in the dead of night without distractions, and set the gamma correction as low as you dare. With this horror mindset in place, the locked and barred exits don't seem quite so restrictive, and one's mind strays to matters of tactics and survival. A huge variety of weapons opens up eventually, on the proviso that you stay alive – and interested.

It may sound like a cruel barb, but this is a game for people who take the Insane Clown Posse seriously. It takes place in an America that's just a little too abstract to believe at face value, more cobbled together from heavy-metal marathons than reality. Quirks and bugs are minimal, and murdering all those criminals is a rewarding, if unpredictable affair. The whole thing only works if you can suspend disbelief, so by all means, play it late when that's brain is weak, tired and open to all manner of suggestion.

JAMES COTTEE

PC GAMES ADDICT A little better than on PS2 or Xbox

IT'S › Dark › Fiendish › Difficult

IT'S NOT › Nice › For Kids › Believable

Murderous

70%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Take 2 ■ **Developer** Rockstar North ■ **They say** 1 GHz, 192 MB RAM, 32 MB Graphics Card ■ **We say** 1 GHz, 256 MB RAM, 64 MB Graphics Card
■ **Multiplayer** No ■ **Link** www.rockstargames.com/manhunt ■ **Community** www.valiant-ent.tv ■ **Influenced by** The Running Man, ICP, Tenchu ■ **Alternatively** Thief III, GTA III

WARLORDS BATTLECRY III

A 2D RTS? In this day and age? What the devil's going on?!

Play as Elves, Dwarves, Undead, Demons, or Plague Lords, like this handsome fellow.

Lightning Bolt! Weather has a huge effect on combat efficiency.

2D graphics with a 3D sheen... no upgrades necessary for *Battlecry III*.

Now here's a blast from the past – the latest installment in the long-running, fondly-remembered Australian strategy series *Warlords*. Once an exclusively turn-based franchise from the golden age of SSG, the real-time action of the *Battlecry* spin-off series has taken on a life of its own. With pre-rendered, 2D, top down graphics, it looks like something out of the forgotten pre-history of PC gaming. And yet, with a smooth interface, a non-linear campaign, and huge wealth of races and units, it manages to maintain its grasp on the imaginations of a discerning sector of the RTS market.

Granted, the brand of fantasy imagery herein is of the tattoo-parlour, panel-van, prog-rock album cover variety, but beneath the slightly stiff animations lurks a game of impressive depth. Fifteen playable sides are represented, each with unique and balanced tech trees and units. Campaign play is based around a quest to track down a rampaging demon, with RTS missions granting clues to his whereabouts in addition to booty and XP. As you trundle about Etheria, red lines to possible destinations fork across the map, bringing to mind another relic of PC gaming – *Carmen Sandiego*.

Once an exclusively turn-based franchise

With the odd exception, each level requires base building, and base building takes time. It may help to imagine *Warcraft II* graphics with *Warcraft III* options, only there is considerably more depth in magic items, spells, unit upgrades and base defences. Building up a base each time takes ages, but the process is more rewarding than exasperating. Sending cheap aerial units to explore the map, building up an army for a ye olde rush attack – these simple pleasures still satisfy. It's only when you get to the melee that things get messy.

Combat is a grave affair and not entered lightly, thanks to some disparate factors of the game design. For one thing, you not only want to keep your heroes alive, but your minions too, as both are strengthened when they survive their battles. The huge variety of units means that you'll want to ensure each are deployed based on their strengths, with ranged untis hanging back, and so forth.

Most noteworthy, once battle begins, the bitmaps for all warring parties seem to fuse together into a muddled, squabbling blob, only the occasional luminous skull effect to show someone's died. It's a lot like the fights in Warner Bros. cartoons; the only thing missing is the billowing dust cloud completely obscuring the action.

Battlecry III bucks some key trends in the PC gaming market: it's not a blockbuster franchise, it's not designed with a console tie-in in mind, and it's not designed to appeal to the feckless dregs of humanity who require instant gratification or a pretty explosion. It also boasts some novel innovations of its own, amongst them a refined control scheme and optional quests scattered through maps. It's hard, deep, and promises dozens, possibly hundred of hours of gaming action to those who can see past the graphics into its world of adventure.

JAMES COTTEE

PC GAMES ADDICT: Dated-looking, but solid

IT'S ›Deep ›nerdy ›time-consuming

IT'S NOT ›Flashy ›Fast-Paced ›For Casual Gamers

Medieval

75%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Infinite Interactive ■ **Developer** Enlight Software ■ **They say** PII 450, 128 MB RAM, 16 MB Graphics Card ■ **We say** PIII 500, 128 MB RMA, 32 MB Graphics Card ■ **Multiplayer** LAN, Internet, up to 6 players ■ **Link** www.warlordsbattlecry3.com ■ **Community** warlordsunderground.tripod.com ■ **Influenced by** Warlords, Warcraft, D&D ■ **Alternatively** Warcraft III, Starcraft

With no zoom ability, most battles resemble war between two nests of painstakingly painted ants.

THE PUNIC WARS
A CLASH OF TWO EMPIRES

It's not looking so fine, young Hannibal

My new definition of cheeky? Releasing an isometric RTS about the Punic Wars. We all know *Rome: Total War* is on its way. We all know elephants are the new Panzers. To make an RTS about the very conflict that put the pachyderm on the military map in the first place, and make it merely *sprite-based*... ooh, that's sauce.

But then, a pedant might argue that to release *Punic Wars* as a new game at all is a tad impudent, given that it is manifestly *Celtic Kings* (PCG 116, 65%) with a different selection of units and slightly less woad. Good job I'm above that sort of thing, really.

> This is *Celtic Kings* with slightly less woad

Like *Kings*, this is an indifferently-animated, old-school historical RTS, with resources but no base-building. Barracks, town halls and other structures are fixed features of the maps, and your resources (gold, food) just sort of materialise in them. The only resource management is in creating supply lines to get these things to where you need them. It's a simple setup, and it leaves you free to get on with what *Punic Wars* is really all about: the fighting. Small armies are easy to churn out and they need to be, because your enemy is busy churning out armies of his own. Your next clash is never more than two minutes away.

Which turns out to be a bit of a bore. With no base-building, each side ends up repeatedly capturing and recapturing identical-looking settlements, and there are dozens of them littering the sizeable maps. It's a long, drawn-out, repetitive chore. No short, satisfying skirmishes here. Nor do the unit types or scenery vary that much from map to map, so where's the incentive to continue? Certainly not in the promised RPG elements, which amount to nothing more than a few power-ups and occasional dialogue to click through. For all the scale of its battles, *Punic Wars*' treatment of its epic subject matter remains as small and uninspired as its war-beasts.

TONY ELLIS

PC GAMES ADDICT

A white elephant. Not so much historic as just plain dated.

57%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Wanadoo ■ **Developer** Haemimont Games
■ **Multiplayer** Up to 8 ■ **Link** www.excalibur-publishing.com ■ **Alternatively** Praetorians

HARRY POTTER
PRISONER OF AZKABAN

Is Harry trapped in licensed-game Limbo?

As the Harry Potter films darken a little, the same cannot really be said for the accompanying series of video games. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* may have landed around the same time as the movie, but aside from a few central plot features, the game has little to do with the events of this more 'mature' film.

This review will go on to pretty much serve as a warning, and while the score (you DID look already right?) may seem kind of high for a warning, this is simply not a game for your average gamer.

On the up, this is clearly the best looking of the Harry Potter games, and also the first to put the player in control of Harry and his friends Ron and Hermione as a group. Each member of the trio has their own spells and abilities and as you'd expect from such a family-friendly franchise, teamwork is necessary to get ahead all through the game.

> A game that practically holds your hand

What's not necessary is any background in gaming, as this is a game that practically holds your hand as it guides you through. There's a whole mess of context sensitive stuff throughout the game that results in a lot of simple point and click play that's just not engaging enough for a gamer.

"Are you talkin' to me?"

Off course, this is a Harry Potter product, and in terms of fulfilling its role as an interactive piece of merchandise, it shines. Accompanying this merry stroll through Hogwarts is enough voice acted dialogue and Harry-style magic to satisfy any rabid young fan of the films. The chance to actually explore Hogwarts at a leisurely pace will go down a treat.

Harry may look better than ever, but unfortunately that doesn't really mean that this is a game that's going to entertain a player wanting anything other than a more vivid picture of Potter's world. Simply too easy to suggest to anyone not shopping for their nieces, nephews or children.

DAN TOOSE

PC GAMES

Pure ambrosia for little Potter-heads, but nothing here for real gamers.

70%

"Puberty's really hit these two hard. They just hold their wands and stare at me..."

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** EA ■ **Developer** Know Wonder
■ **Multiplayer** 1 to 2 ■ **Link** www.harrypotter.ea.com ■ **Alternatively** Harry Potter: Quidditch

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We may have created a new-look PC Games Addict, but we're committed to continually striving to improve the magazine. To give you that added incentive to let us know what you want, we're running an online survey at www.pcga.com.au so you, our readers don't have to mail off any forms or such.

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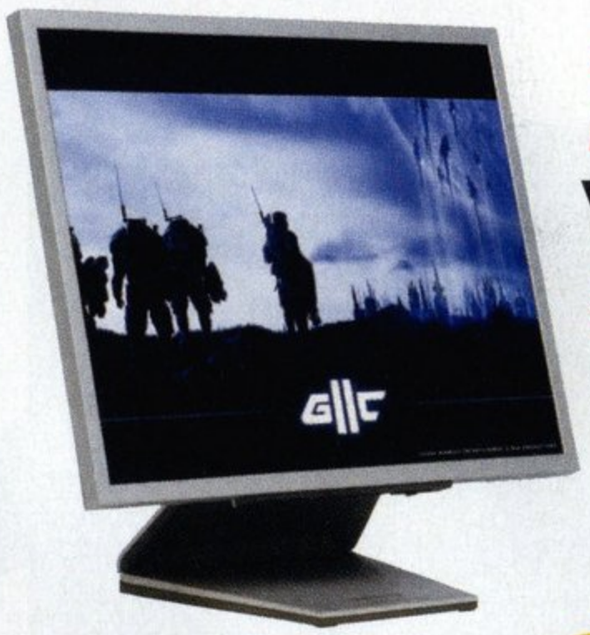

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- Cooler Master ATC 500SX1 case
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- JNC SSF-31 portable MP3 player
- Vivendi games bundle including:

Warcraft III, Lords of the Realm III, Counter-Strike: Condition Zero, Contract JACK and Half-Life Platinum collector's edition

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For details on how to win head to our reader survey at:

www.pcga.com.au

Pro developers have been keeping a close eye on *Red Orchestra* – so should you.

CELEB

HI, I'M A GAME DEVELOPER

Name Randy Pitchford, Gearbox
Credits *Halo, Brothers In Arms*

My fave game: "I've been playing *Pandora Tomorrow* (*Splinter Cell 2*). The multiplayer is really interesting. I have to give Ubisoft a lot of credit for the innovation they've been getting into their games lately."

My fave mod: "Sadly, it's still *Counter-Strike*. I know it's lame to say, because Gearbox is one of the developers of it, but it's still fun."

The thing I'm looking forward to: "Being wrong about my theory that *Half-Life 2* and *Duke Nukem Forever* won't ship anytime soon. Don't even get me started about *Team Fortress 2*!

UT2004 MOD

Red Orchestra 2.1

Orchestral Manoeuvres in Gorky Park

Something special is happening to the mod scene right now, epitomised perfectly by *Red Orchestra*. Set on World War 2's Eastern Front, this *UT2004* mod exudes the kind of professionalism that is currently taking mods to a new level, bringing several teams to the attention of the industry.

Four years in the making, the mod is a front runner in Epic's 'Make Something *Unreal*' mod-building contest. It's not hard to see why. Intense firefights are guaranteed as Russian and German forces engage in savage battle to capture key points on the custom maps. The balance of pace and realism feels damn near perfect too.

This version introduces two new classes: the satchel-charge toting engineer and our favourite, the light machinegunner. Alan Wilson, *Red Orchestra's* historical advisor, gives us a tactical demonstration. Scrambling across the battlefield and hiding behind sandbags he installs his LMG and rips through the enemy as they pour from a doorway. Firing up the popular Berlin map, he shows off the Sniper class, climbing two storeys of a building and firing up the sniper rifle from a window. The sniper-sights pop up and he mows down German troops, who fall to the floor as the Karma physics kick in.

The *Red Orchestra* crew are already nearly $30k richer after claiming the best FPS crown in phase two of the MSU (Make Something Unreal) contest. Vehicles will be added shortly and the long-term aim is to scoop a licence for the full *Unreal* engine.

DOWN LOADER
Brilliant World War 2 mod for *Unreal Tournament 2004*

PC GAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

400Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.redorchestramod.com
Discs	On the DVD
Requires	*Unreal Tournament 2004*
Unmissable, vodka-laced, WW2 action	

LET US SPEND YOUR BANDWIDTH
Use the Download Manager to aid modem digestion. Alternatively, find the month's best mods on the DVD.

BROADBAND BREEZE ‹ › BROADBAND BREAKER

10Mb	50Mb	150Mb	1Gb
56k friendly	*Modem mare*	*Modem meltdown*	*Nightie night*

HALF-LIFE MOD

The Specialists 2.1

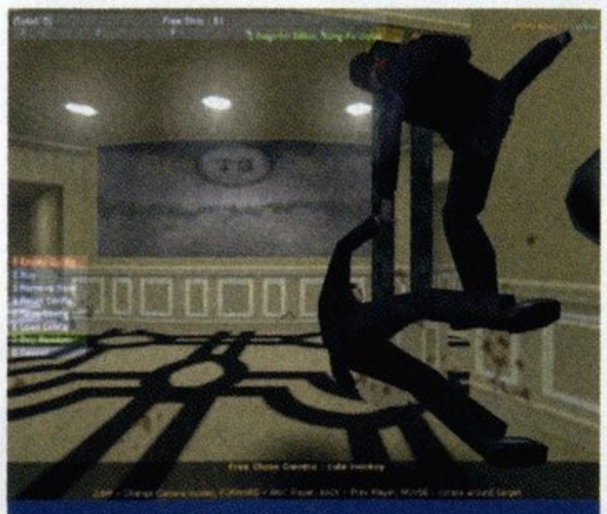
Time to kill in slick slow-motion. Uzi does it

Birdie spree

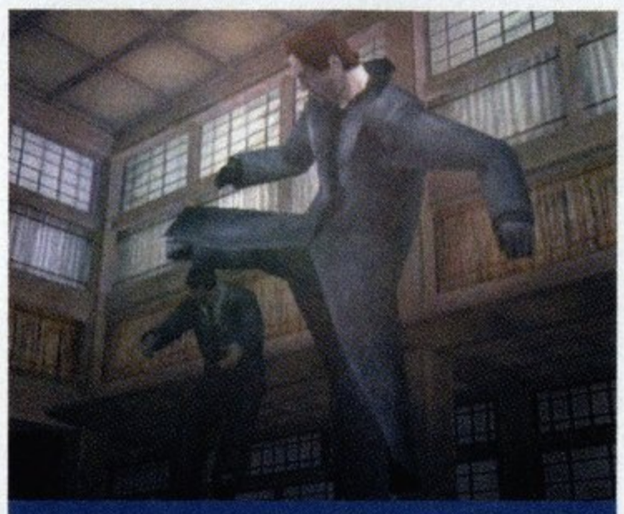
All mods change games, but we can't come up with another as diametrically different as *Duffers Golf* for *Unreal Tournament 2004*

http://duffers.beyondunreal.com

Currently in beta, this diverting mod slips neatly into the *UT2004* folder like a tee into mosit soil. It's the simplest of sims, with the swing controlled by the three-click system and your aim moved about with wild sweeps of the mouse. It works because it exudes old school golf-game charm: aim, time your swing, move up the fairway. Repeat. Just think: the developer looked at *UT2004* and thought of a golf game... Next month: a *Deus Ex* fishing mod.



If in doubt about your next move, just stand on your opponent's leg in mid-air.



Kick weapons out of players' hands in seconds using the smooth, intuitive controls.

Ah, *The Specialists*. What could be better than a deathmatch mod with a premise of pure style? Hold your duelling pistols sideways, dive through windows, kick weapons out of other player's hands. This is a *Half-Life* mod that lets you re-live the violent ballet of your favourite action movies, but with you in the starring role. All that's missing is the flock of white doves.

There's no Terrorists vs Special Forces here, no sides. You are a lone hero, thrust into a film-set world, armed to the teeth with cinema's most spectacular firearms and a bunch of kung fu moves. This is straight deathmatch, but with ninjas and henchman pulling unfeasible stunts, flying kicks and punches among the showers of bullets in order to stay alive.

This latest version hones and tweaks the gamplay, enhancing the weapon physics and adding particle effects that stretch *Half-Life*'s old engine to the tooth-rattling limits.

PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

183Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.specialistsmod.net
Discs	On the DVD
Requires	*Half-Life*
Gordon Freeman meets John Woo	

WARCRAFT 3 MAPS

Frozen Throne maps

Our top four maps. Defrost thoroughly before use

1 DEAD LOCKED

Half-man, half-horsey, the Centaurs once ruled the roost on the lands of Deadlocked. That is, until you rudely interrupted their slumber. This map is all about the goldmines scattered among the rivers and forests. There's plenty of the shiny stuff about - your challenge here is to fight your way past the sleeping centaurs to get to it. Their home, this medium-sized map, is best suited to 4vs4 play, but it's also a 2v2 or Free For All mode contender if you're looking to get your teeth into a longer, more epic struggle.

2 GOLD RUSH

Unsurprisingly, judging by its name, you won't go short on cash here, either - this map's literally covered in lovely gold-giving mines. The trick, of course, is to get your hands on it before your rivals. Designed for 3vs3 or Free For All play, victory here depends on the speed and frequency at which you expand your base to gobble up the surrounding mines. There are mercenaries for hire to help your early forays into unknown territory, and you're going to need them. Those mines are guarded by some pretty nasty beasties.

3 TOWER DEFENCE

Not just an additional map, this is a whole new way of playing *Warcraft III*. Designed for 1-6 players, it locks you in a prison with hordes of Azeroth's hardened criminals. Your task: to prevent them from escaping your maximum insecurity dungeon. You begin with a single guard unit, and have to place towers around the twists and turns of the map to block waves of Snap Dragons, Blood Hawks and Overlords from venturing into the outside world. Slain prisoners equals gold, and gold means more towers and upgrades.

4 EGG HUNT

Fluffy bunnies and big hairy orcs just don't mix, or at least they didn't until Blizzard pulled this map out of their Easter bonnet. Another map that invents a whole new mode of play, this pitches 4-8 players on a big, bunny-shaped island, on a mission to collect as many Easter eggs as possible. Sounds easy? It would be, if it wasn't for the couple of evil thumpers on your little tail. The genius of this game is the new tag power, that enables you to brand your fellow players as 'it', thus turning into them into evil bunny magnets in an instant.

You won't find these maps in any *Frozen Throne* patches, so grab them from the DVD/CD2 or www.battle.net/war3/maps

NOW SHOWING

MAX GOES HOBO HUNTING

Why should I download it? *Max Payne 3: The Fall of Hobos and Senior Citizens* is a superb, tongue-in-cheek parody by mischievous Machinima monkeys, Team Blur.

DOWN LOADER COMEDY MOVIE

1 GRIZZLY DEATH

Not even furry slippers can save this coffin-dodger from a painful death.

2 CAUGHT IN A TRAP

Max's cunningly placed pit trap outside Marks 'n' Sparks did the trick.

3 HELPLESS HOBOS

See the tramps scramble to fall on Max's grenade. Got any spare shrapnel?

4 SPIRITS IN THE SKY

Max rolls back, waving off his crustie chums to the great night shelter in the sky.

PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

33Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.cafeshops.com/teamblurstore
Discs	Unavailable
Requires	Windows Media Player
In bad taste? Maybe. Amusing? Definitely	

Modern weapons, modern settings. US marines versus the locals. It's just like the news.

The alleys of the Mud District map will ring a few bells with *Counter-Strike* veterans. Based on the classic Dust2, it's a must-play.

Jeez. How did he miss? The weaponry might be state-of-the-art, but it won't compensate for an aim like Mr Magoo's.

Call of Duty: Revolt 0.11

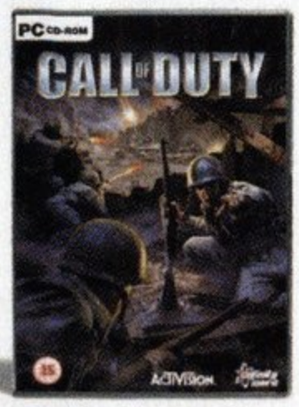
The insurgency has begun. Don't miss it

This is first-person shooting in its purest form. Two factions with powerful weapons fire-fighting it out in urban environments. A raw and simple concept that's grasped and enjoyed within minutes – but that's the real appeal. *Revolt* is the *Call of Duty* mod of the moment.

Developed by LANClan, a team of New York-based gamers turned coders, *Revolt* is at the forefront of the *Call of Duty* mod scene. It's no ground-breaker: pitting US marines versus local resistance in a Middle Eastern war zone. But as you crawl low through the alleyways of the Mud District map, your M16 clasped in your bloodsoaked hands, your heartbeat thumping through your headset as your health bar teeters on the brink of death, you'll struggle to recall such sweet tension in an FPS mod.

Working on a great mod?
We want to hear about it...
pcga@derwenthoward.com.au

DOWN LOADER
COD MOD



The modern-day setting makes *Revolt* immediately accessible, gives it licence to roam the world, and offers an almost bottomless box of toys.

First, there are the guns. Right now the team are concentrating on weapon balance, so factions have limited options spanning short, mid and long-range firearms. An accessory reward system is in place, allowing a string of customisations – your options dictated by your team's performance in the previous round. So the Resistance can bolt a blade of cold steel onto the end of their AK-47s, while the Aggressors can choose to pick off opposition with a full scope on their M14s.

Then, there are the locations. While custom maps are few, those included are high quality: ideal places to drop the safety and let rip. The sprawling cityscape of Sadrcity, the dimly lit crevices of Hizabala City and the tight village streets of Mud District – a clear homage to the classic *Counter-Strike* map Dust2, are all wonderfully textured and meticulously detailed. There are also three small LAN maps that make for short, sharp bursts of combat – perfect for a ten-minute splurge of team elimination.

ON THE DISCS We've inserted this special *Call of Duty* mod and the latest patch into the bargain > Mod, Maps & Utils.

There's more to come. An 'Urban Campaign' has been mooted, featuring Team Domination and new maps, including the White House, where George lives. The weapon count will double, and new factions will be dropped into the existing template. This is one revolt that can't be quashed. Time to take sides.

MARK SUTHERNS

PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

123Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.codmod.com
Type	Multiplayer
Requires	*Call of Duty* v1.4
Ballsy modern-day combat on beautiful maps	

START-UP...

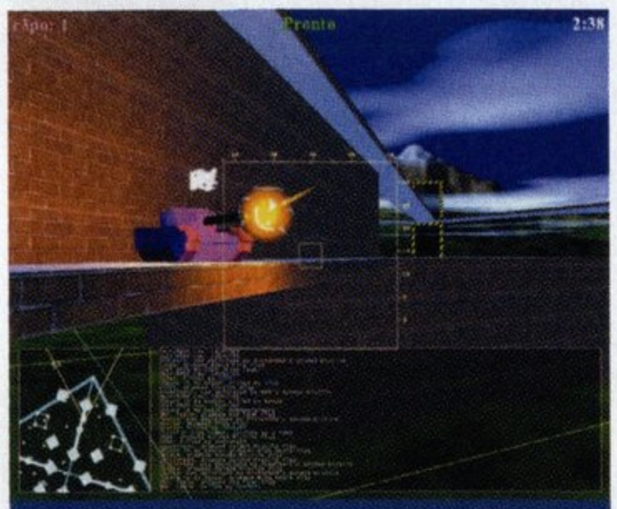
1. Download the mod or grab it off the DVD and install it to your *Call of Duty* directory.
2. Make sure you have the patch for the mod installed. This is currently version 0.11.
3. Fire up a multiplayer game and look for a *Revolt* map to find an active server.
4. Stuck finding one? You can always join the official *Revolt* server at: 64.185. 226.92.28962

FREEWARE

BZFlag

Someone's coloured within the lines

DOWN LOADER MUST PLAY



This game is very basic, but so joyously slick that it's simply brilliant.

This is possibly the most fun you can have without spending any cash. Well, almost.

The one thing that *BZFlag* clearly demonstrates is that the PC is the best system for multiplayer mash-ups. It's *Battle Zone* on speed, and free.

Join other crazed combatants in arenas that typically pit 40 players against each other in capture-the-flag levels that can only be described as Dali crossed with *TRON*. The colour-versus-colour games are furious affairs, with bullets zipping around like there's been an explosion in a Smarties factory. Kill the other colours and get the flag back to your base to score.

The mouse control on the tank is just like *Freelancer*'s; the further you move the cursor from the centre of the screen, the faster your tank hammers across the surface. There's no gravity – the game is played across multiple planes, and tapping the Tab button launches you into the stratosphere. Watching 20 tanks fly though the air like demented, armoured kangaroos really is a gaming pleasure to behold.

PC GAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

8.5Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.bzflag.com
Discs	On the DVD and CDs
Requires	An internet connection
Tanks for the memories	

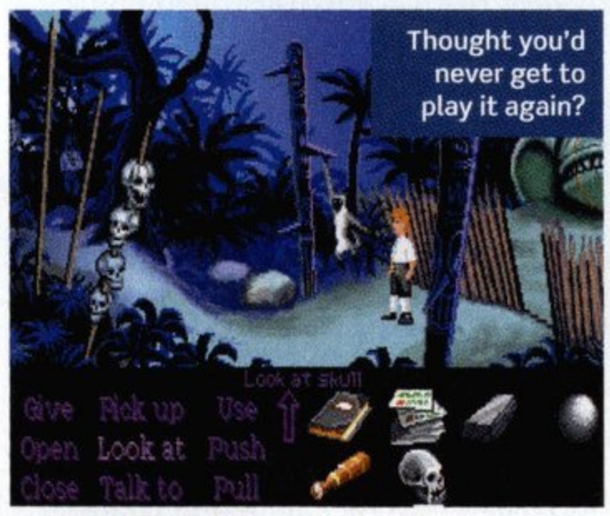
FREEWARE

DOSBox

Indulge in retro gaming

DOSBox is a freeware DOS emulator that runs old games on modern PCs. The loss of DOS support in XP killed off an entire generation of gaming classics, leaving piles of floppy disks and CDs unplayable. But this addition to the PC GAMES ADDICT Toolkit gets them up and running again by creating a DOS environment that survives under XP.

We won't go into the complexities of the program, but a comfortable knowledge of DOS is required. The readme file and the website have enough information for any newbies to bluff their way through. A high-end PC will emulate a low-end 486, but happily, as the application is still only in beta, the emulation quality is always on the up. To start playing, simply run the program, then run the game inside it. It's like having an old PC inside your contemporary machine.



What this means for gamers, is there is now a way to set up DOS games without having to worry about a lack of virtual memory or incompatible soundcard – usually the bane of DOS emulation. *Money Island* and its sequel run free and clear. The original *Grand Theft Auto* runs like a dream, and *X-Wing*, still the best *Star Wars* game in our opinion, plays like it's had an injection of Midichlorians.

PC GAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

663Kb

DATA FLOW

Link	http://dosbox.sourceforge.net
Discs	On the DVD and CDs
Requires	DOS games
This is by gamers, for gamers	

NEWTON

Physics 101

Entertainment = Mouse x Carnage2

IndyGameJam is PC gaming's equivalent of Challenge Anneka. Small teams of programmers are given a piece of technology, and told to come up with unique and innovative games over a course of four days. It attracts programmers from a wide variety of companies, with luminaries from Valve rubbing shoulders with MMO developers. At this year's event, the topic was physics, and specifically: "Physics must be good for something besides ragdolls and crates." The contestants were supplied with a 2D, open-source physics engine and enough pizza to fuel a code-led economy.

These are our favourite games from the event. For more information and downloads (including source code), browse **www.indiegamejam.com**

THE BEST

STUNT HAMSTERS

This game demonstrates how small objects can be forced into interesting actions with just a few simple elements. The small objects in question are hamsters: cute, fluffy and highly explosive. Shoot them from cannons, squeezing them into the tightest gaps.

DEADLY ROBOTS

For an all too brief period in the office, robot fighting was the sport of kings. *Deadly Dance of The Robots* is the most untraditional of beat-'em-ups. You control the extension and retraction of a robot's legs, and the mighty fist. This two-player button-masher is genius.

BOOTLOOTER

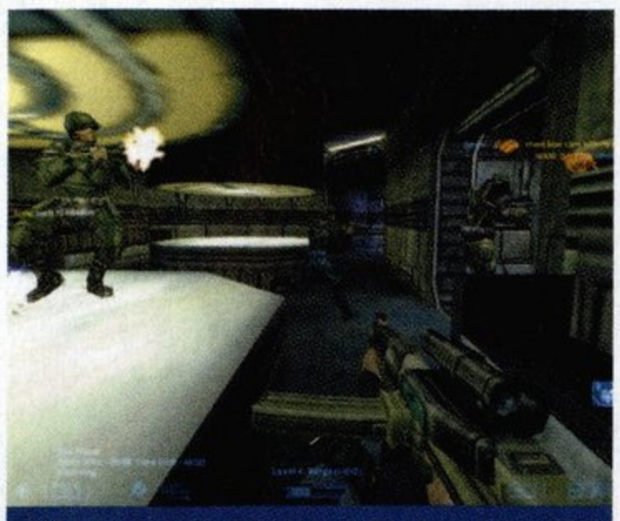
"A post-apocalyptic mall holds the remaining fine shoes in the world. Climb or deform the level to find your footwear." *Bootlooter* is a *Donkey Kong* clone with a difference – it's not the over-bearing monkey breaking the levels, but the player.

A SPOT OF FISHING

In *Sleep Wit' Da Fishes* you play as a gangster, charged with weighing down a stream of comedy cadavers, dumped into an urban estuary. The trick is not to just dump a pile of anvils on the corpse, but to pin them at the sweet-spot, just above the belly-button.

EBI FLIP

Ebi is a shrimp, held in a wire-frame world. You drag him by the nose through the objects, stretching him across the floor. It's basically just experimentation set to music. As the beat changes, so do the physics, ranging from weightlessness to pinned to the floor.



"They're coming out the goddam walls!" Formerly manly marine disgraces himself by jumping onto the table in fright.

Play as savage aliens or gun-toting marines. Marines are most popular but aliens are more skillful and can evolve into higher forms.

Aliens must work together – their cotton skin is no protection from a hail of bullets.

Natural Selection 3.4

It's aliens versus marines. Game on, man

On their website, the rogue developers behind *Natural Selection* have a FAQ that includes the question 'Was *Natural Selection* inspired by Aliens?' We assume they're talking about the film, but the fact is this mod could have been prototyped, developed and released by extraterrestrials from the way it looks. It remains utterly unique in the *Half-Life* mod scene – a teamplay total conversion that pits an interstellar SWAT team against an onslaught of vicious creepy-crawlies. There's still no contact with the colony, and a xenomorph may be involved.

Cue the bug hunt. Creeping through the convincingly textured space station corridors, your heels clanking on the steel floor, you're living in terror: the threat of being torn to bits by a quickwitted Zergling is ever present. For a supposedly amateur mod, *NS* generates a claustrophobic atmosphere far denser than it's commercial cousin, *Savage*.

But like *Savage*, the overall direction of your team is entrusted to a commander. He's responsible for providing way points and doling out ammunition and supplies.

Thankfully, the *NS* client comes with tools for you to quickly depose incompetents and the obtuse, but they're rarely required: the *Natural Selection* community is unusually welcoming and approachable, willing to hand out advice to newbies. Just don't leap into the command chair without seeing the action from infantry-eye level.

New to this version are the Combat maps (labelled in server listings by a 'co_' prefix), which ditch the occasionally complicated resource gathering for a simplified, all-out action and head-biting.

Kills in *Natural Selection* equate to experience that can then be spent on upgrading your armour or weapon, or just pupating into a high form of life. The ultimate of which is the Ono: a gigantic armour-plated rhinoceros), perfect for stampeding stray groups of marines. Meanwhile, for their efforts, the human Frontiersmen are rewarded with more powerful weapons (including a monstrous grenade launcher) better armour, and the occasional jetpack.

And it works. Battles are taut affairs: humans under siege, advancing technology their only hope. Conserve ammo, fire in short, controlled bursts. Watch your spacing. And pray your commander doesn't pull a 'Gorman'.

TIM EDWARDS

ON THE DVD The full mod, with the latest patches, along with the Steam client. Have a peek in > Mods, Maps & Utils

PC GAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

190Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.natural-selection.org
Type	Team-play
Requires	Steam and valid *Half-Life* CD key
A credit to the *Half-Life* community	

START-UP...

1. Download the latest Steam installer from **www.steampowered.com** and install it.
2. Play the *Half-Life* training course. This tells the Steam client to grab all the files it needs.
3. Download *Natural Selection 3.4*. You'll also need the latest patch: see the official site.
4. Install the game, and the latest patch. Join a server. Kill stuff. Avoid getting eaten by Onos.

Call of Duty Custom Maps

Don't just sit there soldier, there's a war going on. Several.

The *United Offensive* update may be inbound, but hanging around waiting for reinforcements is only going to bring on that trench foot, soldier. And you can forget that letter to the sweetheart back home as well, she's probably run off with your flat-footed neighbour. Our advice? Keep your trigger finger twitching and take advantage of the lovingly crafted community maps out there: get on a server and fight new multiplayer battles.

While Infinity Ward's US map contest is sure to serve up an impressive selection of all-new, must-play war zones, we thought we'd pre-empt all that with our own pick of the best *CoD* creations that no soldier should be without. Be sure to get them all installed before Sarge comes to inspect your bunk.

MARK SUTHERNS

ON THE DISCS You'll find this prized collection of battlegrounds ready to extract > Mods, Maps & Utils.

STREETWAR

■ **By** VilePickle ■ **Games** All except Retrieval
■ **Players** 32 ■ **Link** www.vilepickle.com

One of the very first custom maps created, *Streetwar* is still hard to beat for a down and dirty ten-minute fragfest. The man behind it has plenty of *Quake III* mapping experience and it shines through in this urban map. The Germans and Americans begin at opposing ends and battle to reach the enemy spawn points, with a giant underground tunnel running through the spine of the town.

NUENEN

■ **By** Jules ■ **Games** All except Retrieval
■ **Players** 32 ■ **Link** www.angry-company.co.uk

Ever-present on custom map servers, *Nuenen* is pretty much essential. Yet again we get to scatter body parts around a quaint little village, and this one's based loosely on a Band of Brothers episode. There're no sneaky tunnel networks or trenches, it's just run and gun through village buildings, including the obligatory church. Our tip: make for the light machinegun mounted two storeys up between the two tank bombsites.

DOWNLOADER 5 BEST MAPS

THE BEST!

STANJEL

■ **By** Roger Abrahamsson ■ **Games** All
■ **Players** 32 ■ **Link** www.codfiles.com

The cream of the current crop of maps, *Stanjel* is one of the few based on an actual historical setting, in this case the picturesque Slovenian village of Staniel. All the elements are here – machinegun battles in narrow cobbled streets, rifle skirmishes in the ornate open spaces. Plus, the good old twisting tunnels that allow the Germans to flee their headquarters and make it down to the shimmering village pool to wash the Russian blood off their boots.

We know war is a grey and dirty business, but would it hurt you to set just one mod in a toy factory or something, chaps?

BELLICOURT

■ **By** Magnus Sandstrom ■ **Games** All
■ **Players** 32 ■ **Link** www.codfiles.com

This village map takes Infinity Ward's *Carentan* and cranks up the claustrophobia. Typically the action is drawn towards one of the bombsites at the church, the bell tower providing a popular but rather obvious haunt for snipers. We prefer the handily placed scaffolding in the centre of the map – always good for headshots. Oh, and be sure to grab the moonlit version too, and pop some strangers in the night.

THE SECOND COMING

■ **By** BigBoyG ■ **Games** All
■ **Players** 32 ■ **Link** www.codfiles.com

The twisted wreckage and crumbling brickwork of this town create an eerie, movie-style backdrop. The slope to the north provides some furious firefighting, while the twists of the underground sewer allow teams to pull off cunning sneak attacks. It's the two sewer bridges connecting north to south that are often the centre of the conflict on this map, however. Pin the enemy on these and the battle is often in the bag.

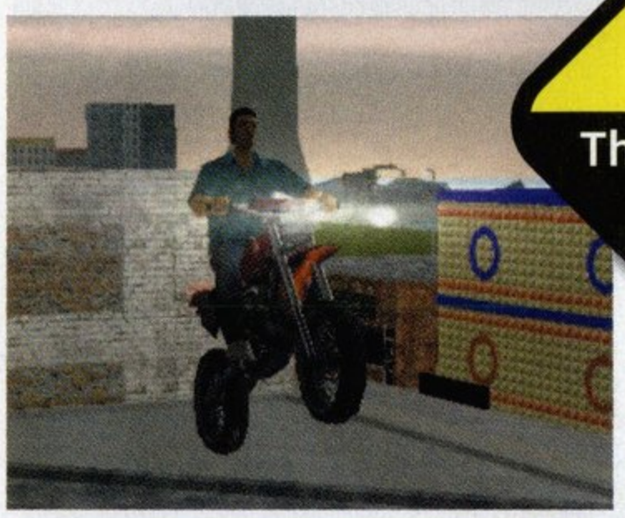
START-UP...

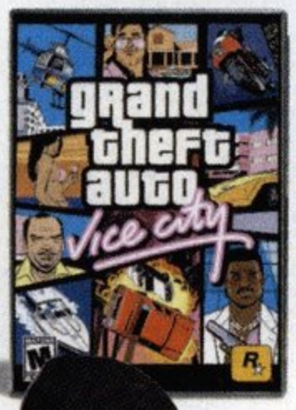
1. Grab these bullet-ridden maps off your disc or download them from the links above.
2. Locate the 'Main' subdirectory of your *Call of Duty* folder, and unzip the maps to there.
3. Start up *Call of Duty*, fire up a multiplayer game and buzz some of your mates. Or...
4. Search for a server online. GameArena has multiple *CoD* servers, best check there first.

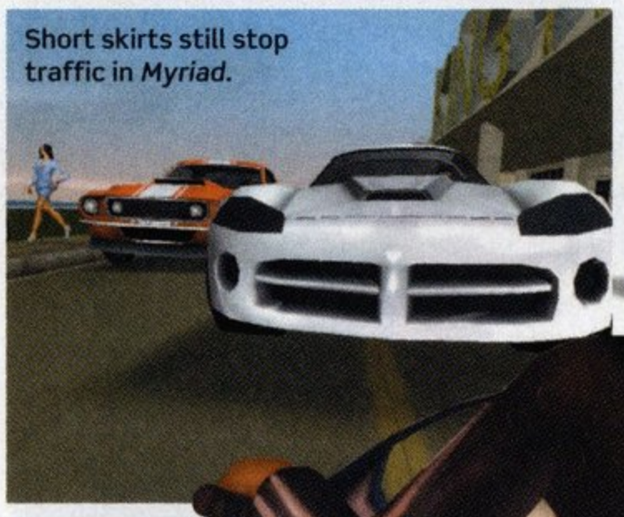
The streets of *Vice City* morphed by 99 forumites. It's going to be a helluva ride.

MOD NEWS

The sub-developers move in on *GTA: Vice City*







Short skirts still stop traffic in *Myriad*.

Expect to see new models and skins for all of *Vice City*'s cars and bikes.

GRAND THEFT AUTO

GTA Vice City Myriad

A new *Vice* squad gets busy

Trust a *Grand Theft Auto* mod to break the rules. In true Tommy Vercetti style, *Myriad* is a fun-loving criminal, trashing mod development conventions. It's breaking up its world into a series of lots and handing them out to individual modders to work on.

"Development, shmevelopment," as Tommy might say. Just possibly.

Constructed by a group of *Vice City* dropouts residing at **www.gtaforums.com**, *Myriad* will eventually have a playing area bigger than Rockstar's original game. Composed of a total of 99 lots, each created by its own modder, the island already includes skyscrapers, scrapyards, commercial zones and its own 'Little Tokyo'. There's no central story for your character to explore, but plenty of missions and sub-plots will be weaved into this patchwork, many of which already sound promising.

"One of the more detailed is the 'Run for the party' mission," explains lot owner Casey Dahlin. "This requires the player to liberate the access route to a nightclub on top of the skyscraper. Coupled with unintentionally hilarious voice acting from the lot's native German creator, it's one of our most entertaining missions."

Even bigger than the original game

There'll be plenty of *Vice City*-style pursuits that will find you clambering into police cars, limos and firetrucks, although *Myriad* is expected to go further than even Rockstar dare to tread, as Dahlin explains: "Our fire mission has you spraying out actual building fires with the water cannon, and rescuing asphyxiated victims."

Myriad's scattered team is also looking to better Rockstar on the details too, with authentic streetsigns and names, plus a host of new vehicles modelled on real-world cars. "They're being added all the time," says Dahlin. "Vehicle modding is becoming more popular, and is often less of a commitment than developing a lot."

The real beauty is that you can iron your pastel suit and crash the party at any time. Individual elements are already available at **www.gtaforums.com**. With *Myriad*'s unique approach to design, lot content is being posted as soon as it's done. A full, user-friendly installer will eventually surface, with a beta version likely to go live in the months ahead. Alternatively, if you're looking for a mission of your own, you can show your face on the forum and get in line for a vacant lot. Tell 'em PC GAMES ADDICT sent ya.

PCGAMES README

DATA FLOW

Author The Myriad team
Link www.gtaforums.com
Percentage complete 20%

There's an obvious co-op element to this artwork, clearly the game will support team play.

HL2/UT2004

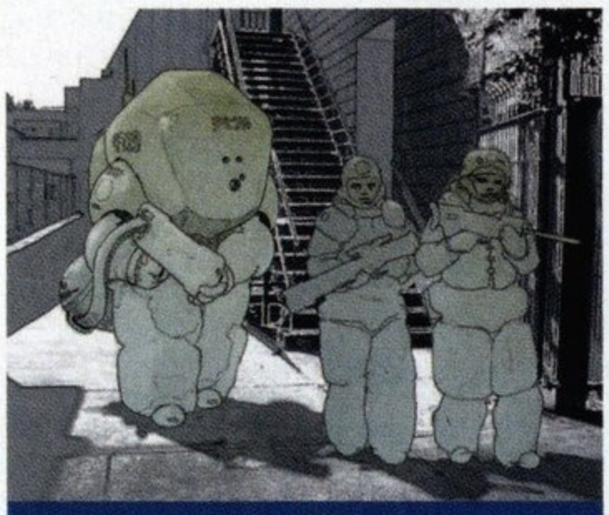
Neotokyo

MOD NEWS HL2 MODS

Are you looking Anime?

Akira and Ghost in the Shell fans wanting to spread the lead in the world popularised by those movies should keep tabs on *Neotokyo*. It's a multiplayer FPS mod for *Half-Life 2* and *UT2004*, set 25 years into the future in Akira's Tokyo. *Neotokyo* is a desperate place: man and machine are melding, and the world is wracked by massive social problems. The rich accrue power with abandon, the poor are more exploited than ever. And, as we know from Akira, teen angst has taken on a brutal, paranormal strength of its own.

Against this dystopic background, the *Neotokyo* team are developing a team multiplayer mash-up. They're also promising "innovative gameplay modes in the spirit of the universe of *Neotokyo*." No word on what those modes will be, but with Source's spectacular physics, and Akira's telekinetic powers, there's every chance we could see some brutal online psychic battles. An alpha version of the *UT2004* strand of the mod will be released imminently, so we'll know soon enough if the modders are on the right track.



"You've got to overcome that shyness, Phil."

The modders' strong visual style has particularly caught our imagination. What's more, their aesthetic should satisfy fans of the series without stepping on the toes of the original creators by including any of the original characters. The artwork they have sent us is some of the most impressive we've seen, and if they can capture this in-game, then we could soon be playing something special.

A game like this draws you in. Ahahahahahah.

PC GAMES README

DATA FLOW

Author The *Neotokyo* team
Link www.neotokyohq.com
Percentage complete 25%

A classic tale of good versus evil. Probably.

HL2/FAR CRY

Jedi: Timeline

Are you Luke-ing at me?

Whoever he is, he's got us scared.

Jedi: Timeline is a total conversion, reworking *Far Cry* and *Half-Life 2* into a Wookiee-sized singleplayer and multiplayer Star Wars game. The dev team aren't pulling any punches either. They're planning set-piece battles that cover the full history of the Republic, from the Sith Era to the New Jedi Order.

They're keeping the singleplayer details secret, but the multiplayer plans are ambitious. Depending on the mission, the player will play either the Light or the Dark side. Some missions are co-operative too, and thankfully the bulk will apparently take place in the classic Star Wars conflicts, such as stealing the plans to the Death Star. One to watch, this is.

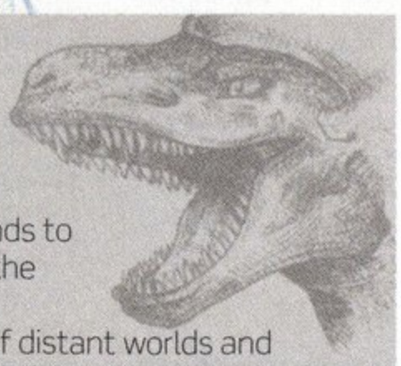
PC GAMES README

DATA FLOW

Author The *Jedi: Timeline* team
Link www.jeditimeline.com
Percentage complete 10%

HALF-LIFE 2

DRACTEN



This bestial *HL2* total conversion intends to diabolically irradiate the DNA of both the singleplayer and multiplayer games.

Source-powered *Dracten* is a tale of distant worlds and intense evil that begins when Mankind discovers a new planet on the edge of known space. The planet is a godforsaken deathworld where genetic abominations fight a savage battle for survival. Imagine bi-pedal man-foxes firefighting with shambling dino freaks. Every player adopts their choice of mutant earth creature, including mythical beasts such as dragons. The multiplayer plan is equally ambitious, promising AI participation in team-based levels. As for the release date, that's a secret too. In the meantime, wish the team luck at **www.dracten.hs.com**.

MOD-MAKING AND LEVEL DESIGN MADE EASY

How to build a multi-player *Far Cry* map

D-I-Y

Simple MOD ideas you can do in a weekend

WHAT WILL IT TAKE?

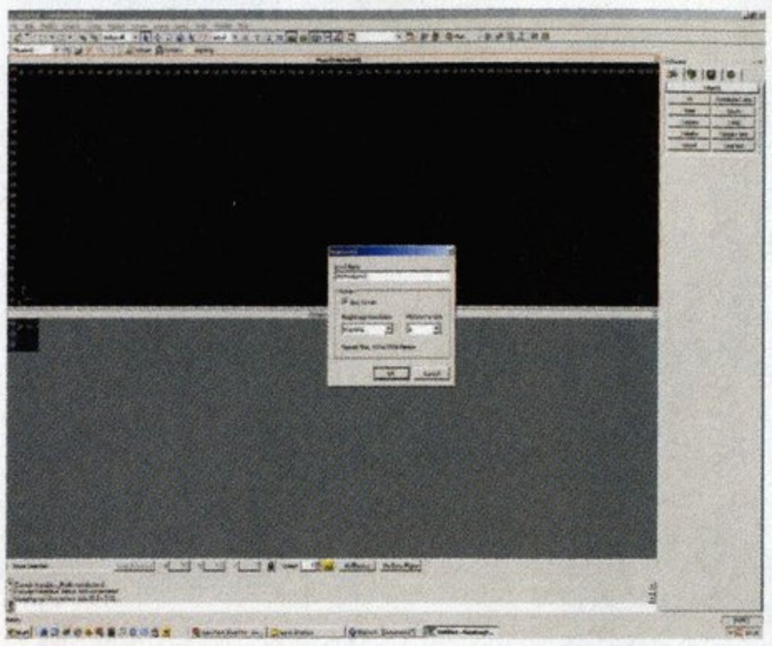
Skill Easy
Time 2-4 hours

WHAT WILL I NEED?

- A copy of *Far Cry*
- www.farcry-thegame.com
- The extra notes and sample map **On the discs**
- Time to add in other ideas and features to your creation.

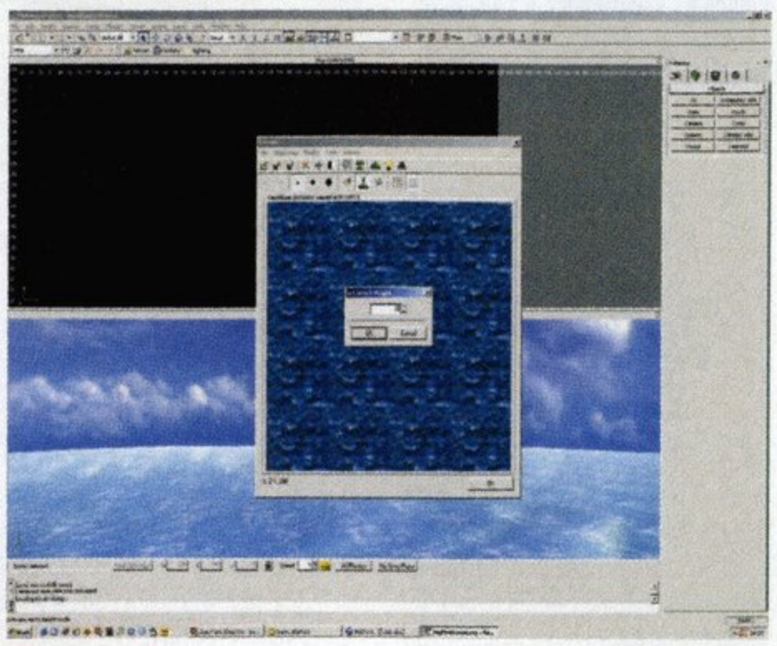
PCGAMES RESOURCE HARVESTER

- **Official *Far Cry* homepage**
  www.farcry.ubi.com
- **The Sandbox Editor Manual**
  ftp.ubisoft.com/games/farcry/manual/Sandbox_Editor_User_Manual_v1.1.zip
- **Largest *Far Cry* community website**
  www.farcryhq.com
- **An English centric *Far Cry* website**
  www.farcryarena.com



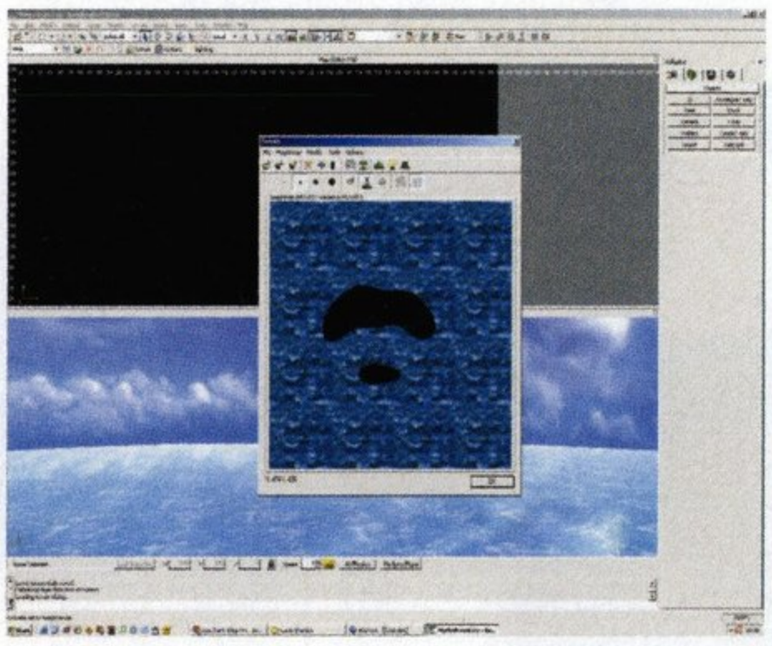
01 MAP MAKING

Relax: this is a snap. In step 10 you'll see a * symbol, corresponding to FC_Tutorial.txt on the coverdisc, which explains that tricky step in greater detail. For now, start the Sandbox editor (Far Cry\Bin32 Editor.exe. In the File menu, click New. Give your map a name and set the Heightmap Resolution to 512x512. Click OK. From the Mission menu (at the top of the screen, don't panic) click New and name the mission FFA. Save your progress now. Do this often.



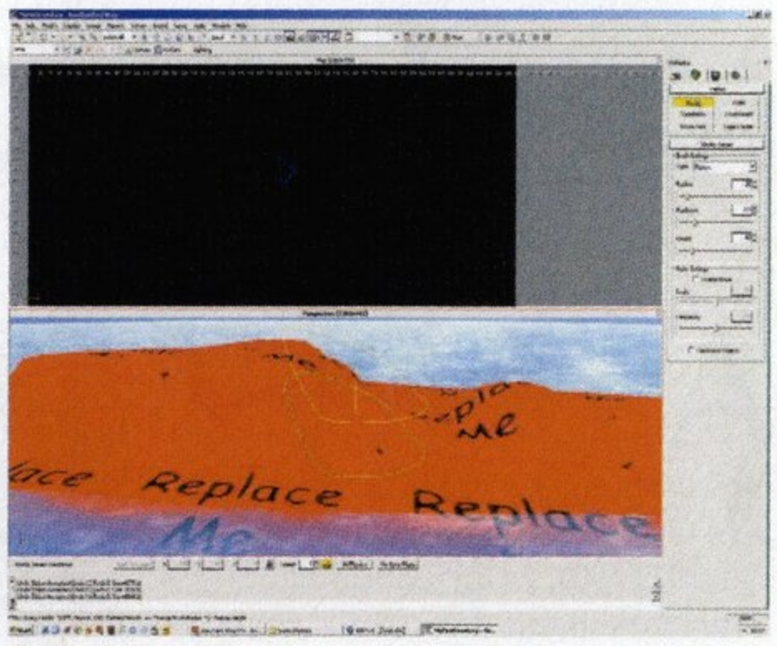
02 ABOVE SEA LEVEL

There are three buttons on the lowest row of top toolbars: Terrain, Texture and Lighting. Click the Terrain button. In the window that pops up, on the second row of buttons click the one to the right of the already depressed 'paintbrush' button. This is the Set to Height button. If you hover the mouse over any button it will tell you what it is. Set the field that appears to 18. In *Far Cry*, the default sea level is 16 so anything over that will be above the water line.



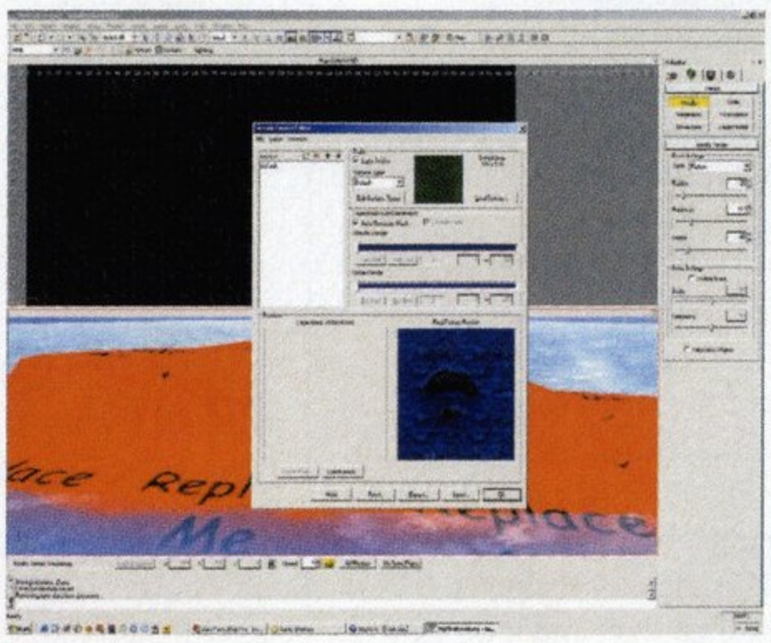
03 LANDMASSES

The large blue square that forms the bulk of this window is your map. With the left mouse button, draw one large blob and one small blob somewhere in the middle. These will be your basic landmasses. Click OK when you're happy with them. You may now have to locate them in the lower window of the editor, where you can see sea and sky. Do this by holding down the right mouse button over the blue window and using the mouse and W,A,S,D keys.



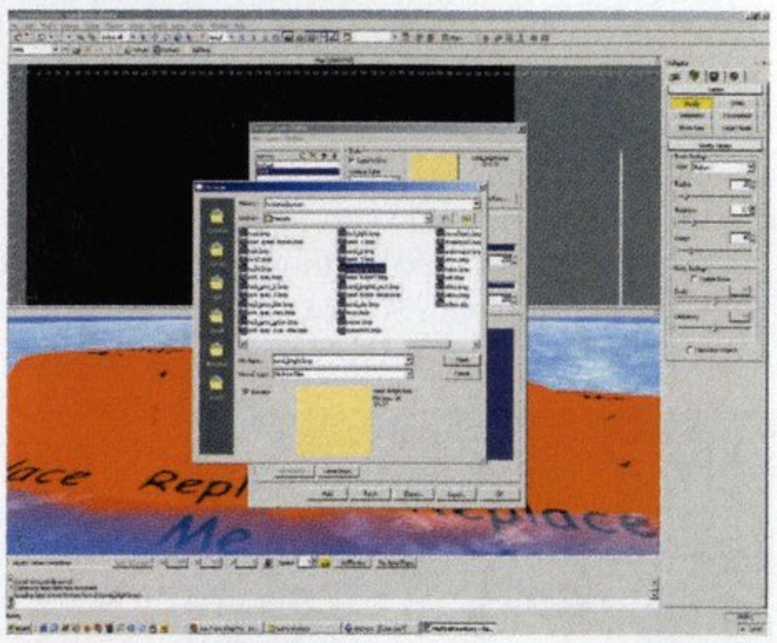
04 RAISING HILL

We're going to 'paint' some higher ground. Move the camera into a position over the landmass. There are four tabs on the right of the screen underneath the word RollupBar. Click the green one, then click Modify beneath it. Notice the slider bars that appear. In the box next to Radius, change our 'paintbrush' size to 20. Change the Height box to 40. Notice that it was set to 16, the default sea level. Now, on the red landmass draw some hills with the left mouse button.



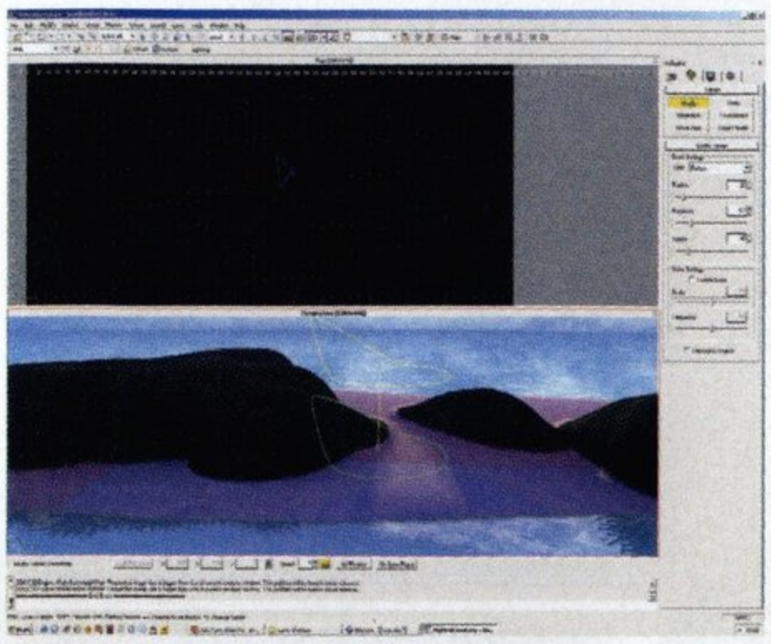
05 RED, MEET SANDY

That red is ugly. Let's replace it with some sand. Remember the three Terrain, Texture, Lighting buttons at the top? Click the Texture one. Above the big white box in this window you'll see the word Layers. Click the square button next to this, type in the word 'sand' and press Return on the keyboard. Click this new 'sand' layer (highlighted blue) and find the Load Texture button on the far right of the window. Click it. Browse to the textures/terrain folder.



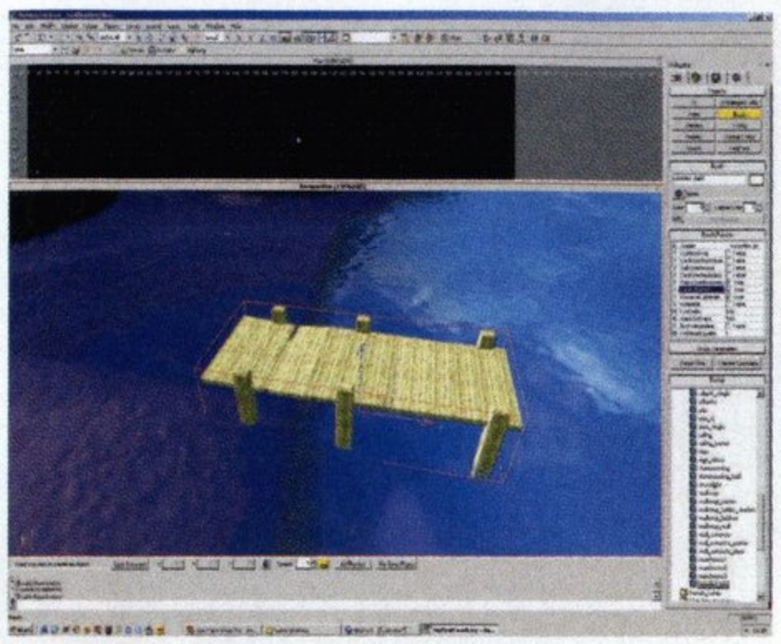
06 SOME OF A BEACH

Double-click sand_bright.bmp. See the two blue slider bars? Set Altitude Range to 19 then click Set End. This sets the maximum height that the sand texture will be applied. At 19 that's all the beaches, but should leave your hills the default grass texture. Click OK. The editor will process this, but you'll still see red 'replace me' textures. To see the new sand you've applied, go into the File menu and click Generate Surface Texture, click Yes, then OK.



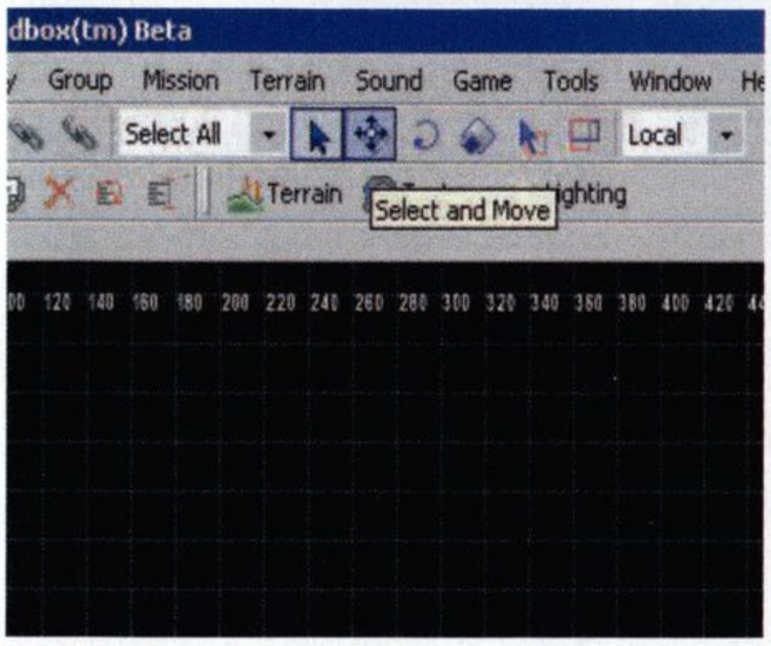
07 ISLAND EXPLORER

Ignore the Errors Report list by clicking Close. It's supposed to do that. You should now see something that looks more like an island. If you want to run around your creation, make sure you're not too high over ground and press Ctrl + G. This will drop you into the game. Walk around, explore. You can switch back to editing mode by pressing Esc. If you're not happy with the island you can play around with the Height settings you discovered in step 4.



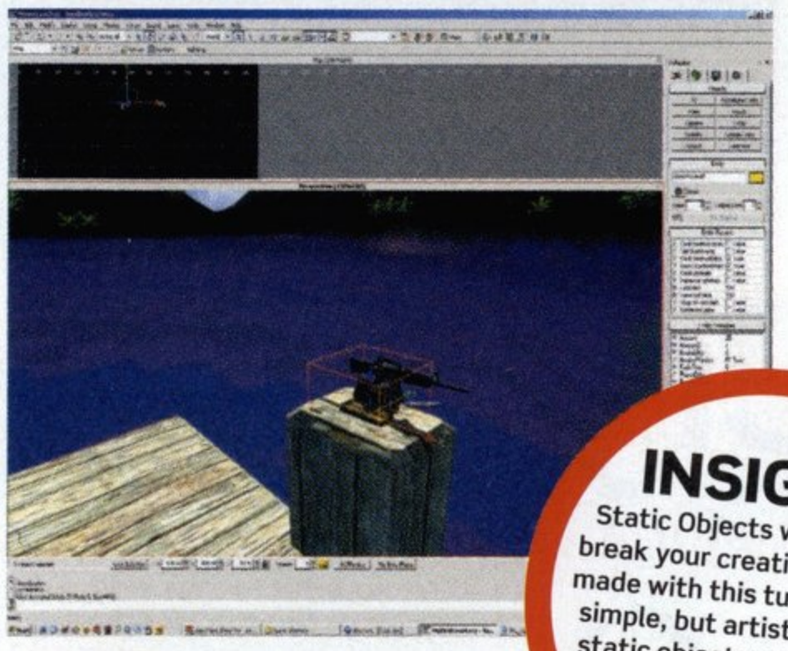
08 PIER OF THE REALM

It's a barren island, so let's add some static Objects. On the four tabs beneath the word RollupBar on the far right of the screen, click the pointing Hand tab, then click Brush below it. Double-click the Outdoor folder below, then the Harbour folder. Find wooden_pier. and double-click it. In the main window your cursor will now have a big pier attached to it. Don't worry about placing it exactly just yet, just drop it anywhere by pressing the left mouse button.



09 REPOSITIONING

Click the crosshair button shown above. This is the Select and Move tool. You'll notice that the pier you dropped has red, green and blue arrows in the centre representing the axis. With this tool selected you can grab any of these axes with the left mouse button and move the pier along it. Fine-tune this using the three X, Y, Z boxes at the bottom of the screen. If you need to rotate the pier use the Select and Rotate tool (right of the Select and Move tool).

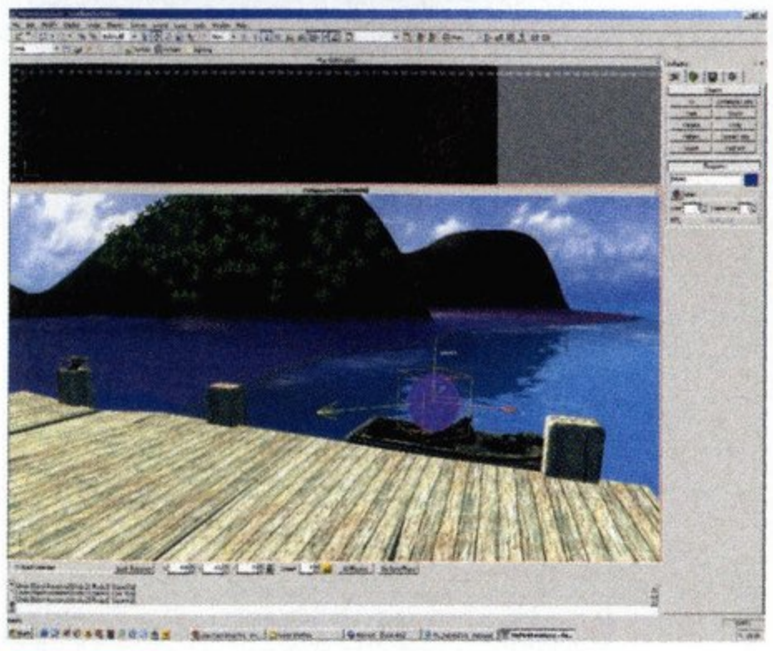


10 OBJECTS AND ENTITIES

Place buildings, bushes, anything [*1]. To place usable objects, click the Entity button beneath the Brush button. Double-click Boat from the vehicles folder and position it near the pier. From the Pickups folder, place some weapons and ammo – don't use the Weapons folder. Alter the Respawn timer property or they'll only spawn once.

INSIGHT

Static Objects will make or break your creation. The map made with this tutorial is very simple, but artistic flair with static objects can transform this basic skeleton into a very sexy animal indeed.



11 RESPAWNY DEVILS

Finally, some Player Respawn Points. Still on the Hand tab, click the TagPoint button. Click ReSpawn and rename the field that reads 'Respawn1' to 'players', then place the spawn point on the map. Repeat this process renaming each one as 'players'. Place enough spawn points for the max number of players you're going to allow onto servers running your map, otherwise people will spawn inside one another, and we don't want that. Ctrl + G to test.

12 YOU'VE DONE IT!

Now all you have to do is export this map to the *Far Cry* game engine and load it up. It probably won't look much, but if it runs you'll have learnt the basics successfully and can progress from there. Click 'Export to engine' in the File menu. Exit the editor, boot up *Far Cry* and get the console by pressing tilde: [`]. Type in '\map mapname' (where 'mapname' is what you called your map) and all being well it should load. Test. Tweak. Repeat until famous.

Design Law Debunked

Not a rule **"The game must have clear objectives"**

Dave Morris is lead designer at Elixir

Designers normally aim for optimum usability. However, in The Design of Everyday Things, Donald Norman cites games as one of the few cases where the designer might sometimes deliberately confuse or obfuscate: a game where everything is obvious would be pretty trivial.

We shouldn't get mixed up between gameplay and interface design. Say I have to cross a fast-flowing river. Near at hand is a crate. If I smash it, I'll get a long plank to use as a bridge. As designer, you don't want the solution to be trivial – hence you didn't just leave a plank there on the river bank. But once the player knows what needs doing, he shouldn't have to ponder which buttons he needs to press to smash the crate.

So it looks like the rule is: It must be clear what you need to achieve (cross the river) and, once you've figured out the methodology (smash the crate), the process (press the action key) must be clear too.

Except… is that first part a hard-and-fast rule? Do games always need clear objectives?

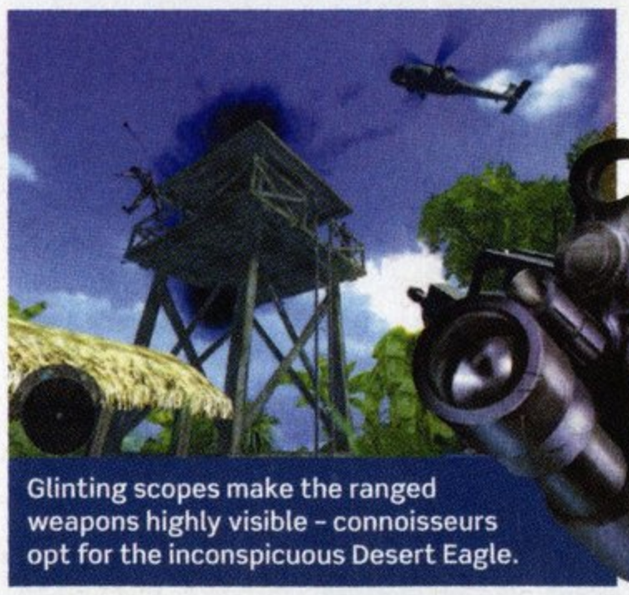
In the old Atari game *Dungeon Master*, the quest was to find a magic staff and bring it back to the White Lord. That was clear right from the off. On the way back with the staff, I'm beginning to have second thoughts. Do we really want to put all this power in the hands of a strident demagogue? And there was one other little niggling detail. Of around 50 spell combos, there was one that didn't seem to have any use at all. Funny that.

If you've played *Dungeon Master*, you'll know how these factors fitted together brilliantly. A dubious objective and what looked like an oversight in the interface were really vital clues to the real conclusion of the quest.

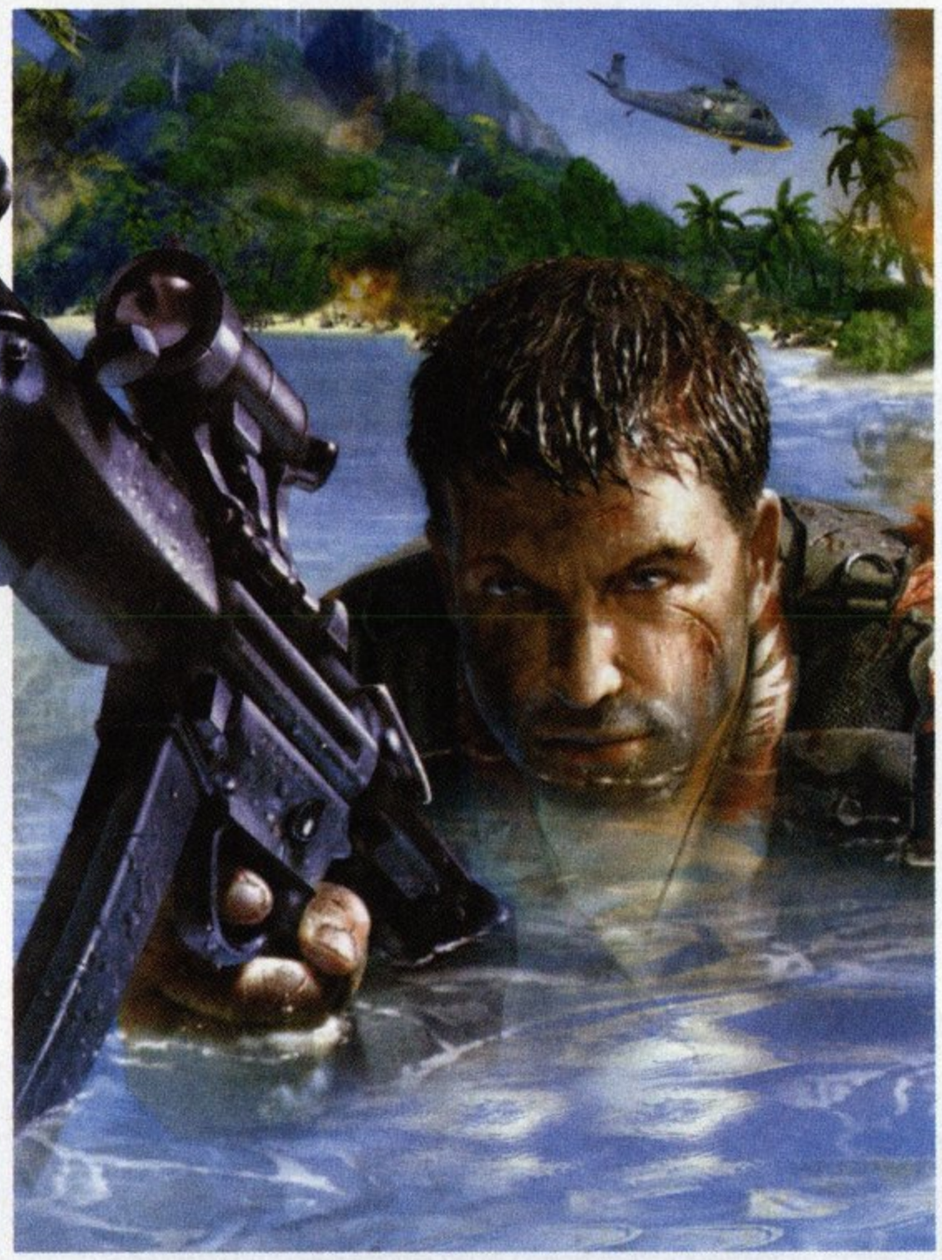
So, games should have simple, clear objectives. But how the player should go about completing these objectives should not always be obvious.

Want to write a mod tutorial for PC GAMES ADDICT? Email us at:

pcga@derwenthoward.com.au



Glinting scopes make the ranged weapons highly visible – connoisseurs opt for the inconspicuous Desert Eagle.



Vehicles are tragically under-employed and very hard to control; hopefully the modders can manage a *Battlefield* knock-off in time.

Few things are more satisfying than sneaking up on a camper and gutting him like a rainbow trout. It's the simple pleasures.

Witness the prettiest bunny-hopping and wild bullet-spraying to grace any multiplayer first-person shooter.

Far Cry Multiplayer

The jungle ain't that welcoming – yet

After *Far Cry*'s dazzling debut we hoped the multiplayer might be something special. Huge levels, beautiful graphics, vehicles – the mere removal of mutant monkeys should guarantee success.

Alas, Crytek have skimped on the online action. There's considerable potential here, but the vanilla experience is sadly lacking.

Deathmatch is, predictably, reasonably popular and highly accessible. Sadly, while it's a hugely entertaining short-term kick, the allure rapidly fades thanks to the deeply unbalanced weaponry. The big guns are simply too powerful, and standard deathmatch is eye-gougingly tedious as a result. One person using secondary grenade fire can splash-damage you to gibbery within seconds.

Against this, the much-feared snipers aren't actually too bad. While the ridiculously long range of the rifle ensures there are plenty of cretins perched on mountaintops, the lens flare and bullet trail make them easy to spot. As the campers invariably incense everybody else in the level they don't tend to hold their post for very long – even on the numerous locations where they've managed to shimmy up a clipping bug and perch on an otherwise impregnable location. There are more than a few instances of such patchy programming: trick ladders, sticky scenery and invisible injuries are depressingly regular occurrences.

LONG PLAY MULTIPLAY TEST

Played by Jon Hicks
Played for 30 hours

Team Deathmatch is roughly as popular and fractionally more interesting, but tactics are largely unheard of and the huge, open levels don't lend themselves to anything other than running around looking for your next victim. Skip over to Assault, however, and the proceedings sharpen up a little. Tighter maps and character classes demand a proper grasp of tactics, and a face-off between two organised teams can stretch into a genuinely exciting contest. With engineers knocking up (or knocking out) defences, snipers covering forward troops and more liberal use of the under-played vehicles, it's by far the most satisfying *Far Cry* experience.

ON THE DVD Experience *Far Cry* multiplayer for yourself with the excellent Capture the Flag mod > Mod section

Sadly, at the time of writing there's a rather sparse showing on the servers. Still, the online community is bubbling away in the background, and while most of it is in German there are already a good few maps and add-ons. The accessibility of the Sandbox editor suggests there will be plenty more to come, too, while the sheer beauty of the engine has snared plenty of ambitious mod projects. If even a fraction of the community's plans pay-off then *Far Cry's* multiplayer future looks rosy indeed. It's just a shame that right now, there's only a set of solid but stodgy foundations.

PCGAMES README

DATA FLOW

First review	PCGA 21, 91%
Why now?	The first few mods are approaching
Tired FPS modes with some surprisingly irritating knobs on. Huge mod potential	

■ **Publisher** Ubisoft ■ **Developer** Crytek ■ **Requires** P4 1GHz, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb GeForce 2/ATi 8500 ■ **Multiplayer** LAN or internet with up to 16 players ■ **Link** www.farcry-thegame.com ■ **Community** www.farcryarena.com ■ **Influenced by** Quake, Jurassic Park, Jerry Bruckheimer

Australia's best gadget magazine

T3

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THE STORIES THAT MAKE US GLAD WE'RE GAMERS

Half-Life In An Hour

Videogame free-running: the new extreme sport

Rules are made to be broken – especially if you're making a speed demo. A new game culture has arisen. Enthusiasts complete levels, sections and entire games in the shortest possible time. Ignoring the developers' constraints, they take their own routes to victory. It began with *Quake*, but Christoph Erhardt, known online as -think.circle-, has raised the bar. He has completed *Half-Life* in under an hour. And the movie is one of the most eye-popping pieces of gaming skill we've ever seen. We cheered as he ran along invisible walls; shot aliens before they arrived; spring-boarded off tripmines and generally exploited every trick in the game. Below, Christoph tells us how he managed this extraordinary gaming feat, and talks us through his top five trickiest moments. Think you can do better? Get in contact.

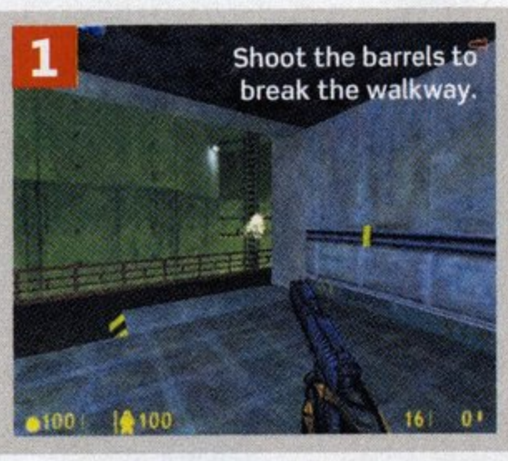
CULTURE MAD SKILLZ

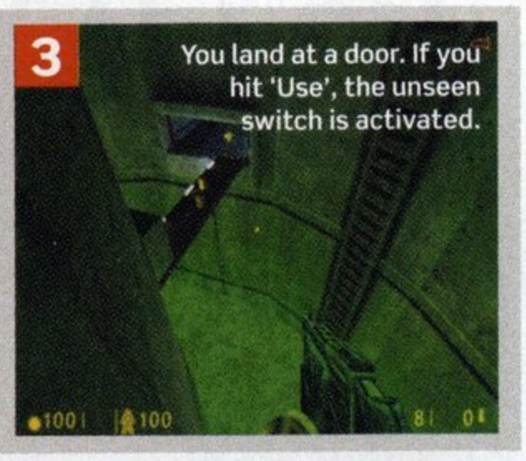
ON THE DVD The video of Christoph in action had us howling out loud at his audacity > Movies.

CRAIG PEARSON

15:40 Blastpit Jump

"Reaching the pipe required a series of 'bunnyhops', with the last jump on the railing. At first I shot the canisters on the bridge because it helps me to recognise the right spot for the hops. The first jump has to be on the very left jag of the broken bridge, the second does not have to be very precise but the third has to be on the railing. Hitting the 'use' button as you land triggers a switch behind the wall. In *Half-Life*, when you try to activate a lever the game doesn't check if there is a wall in between."



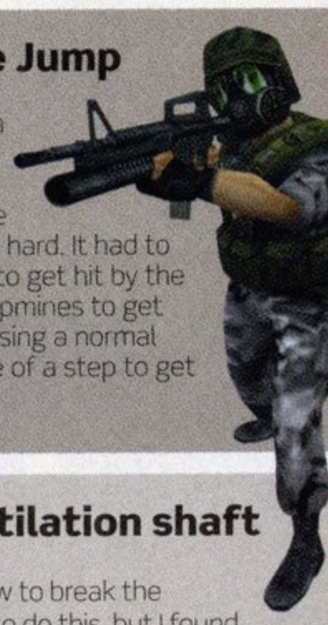


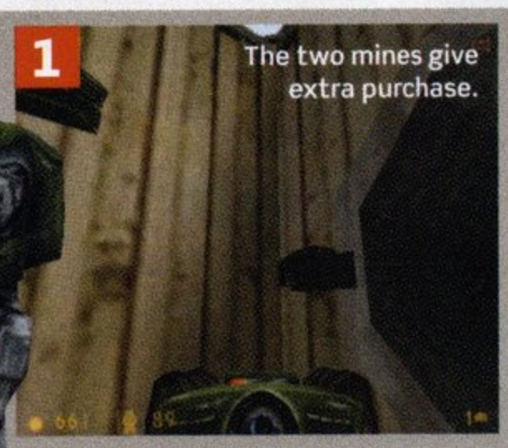
20:30 Tripmines in On A Rail

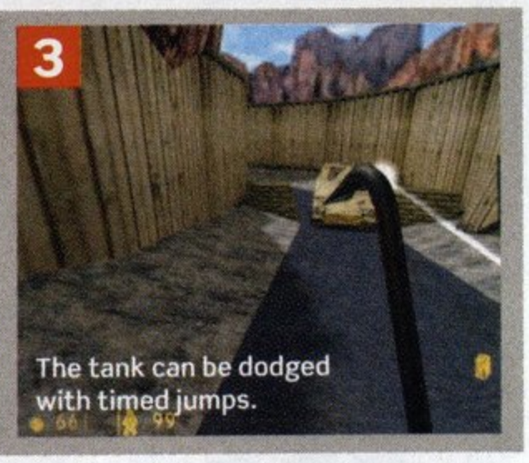
"Finding out the correct placement for the tripmines was the most difficult part of this section. I had to be very careful: a flawless placement of the mines is crucial. If you place one too low you will not be able to get all the way up with just two mines, and you will have wasted those mines. Alternatively, if you place a tripmine too high, you can't get up onto it at all. Getting through the initial burst of electrified water is also hard, but if you constantly jump, you can make it without draining too much energy."

35:15 Tripmine Jump

"Jumping out from the pipe on two tripmines to the upper level, and then afterwards jumping into the shelter to the button and back out was very hard. It had to be very fast as I did not want to get hit by the tank. That's why I used two tripmines to get up to that place rather than using a normal route. This way gives me more of a step to get up and over on."

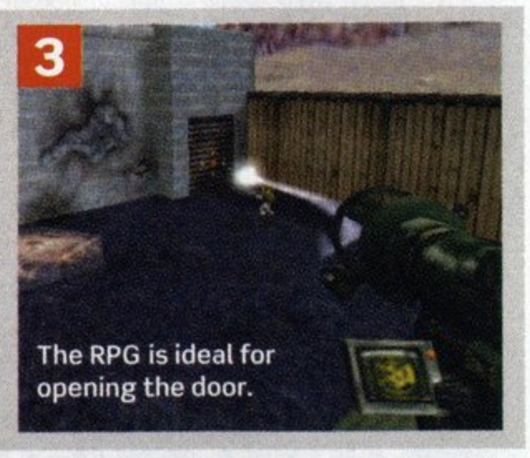






37:50 The Ventilation shaft

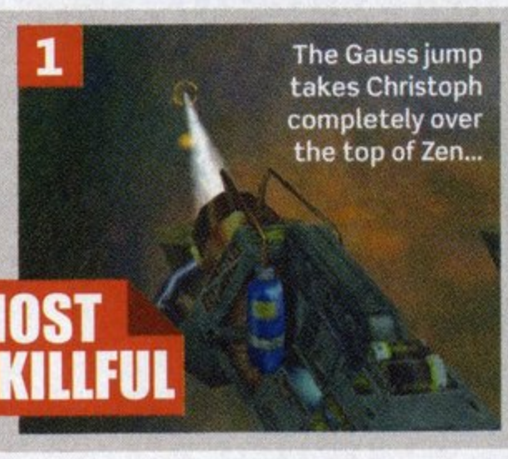
"This is a prime example of how to break the game. The player isn't meant to do this, but I found out that it is possible to get through from the *other* side of the ventilation shaft. There was no invisible wall to stop me! To get through from the right side I had to break the lattice, then make a step back and jump through with precise timing. Outside, the controllable RPG gun makes short work of the grunts, and is handy for opening the door."

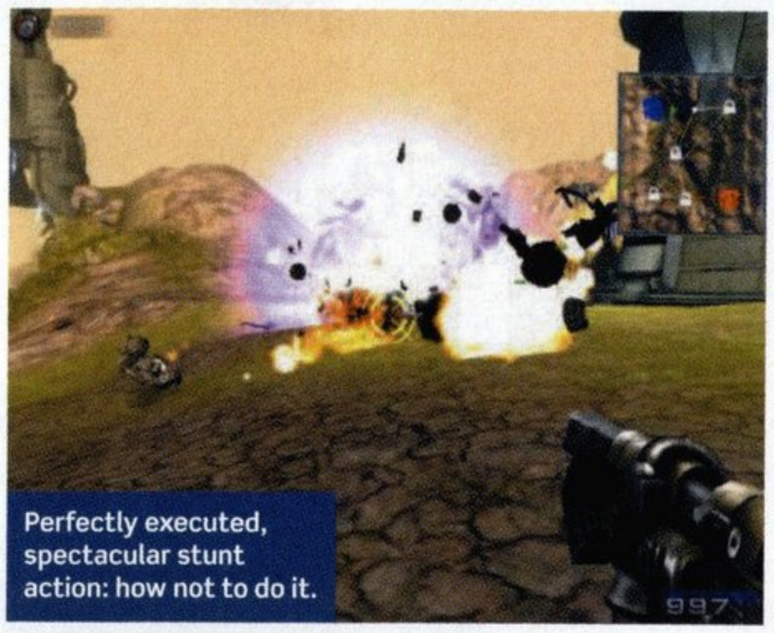


48:50 Xen Jump

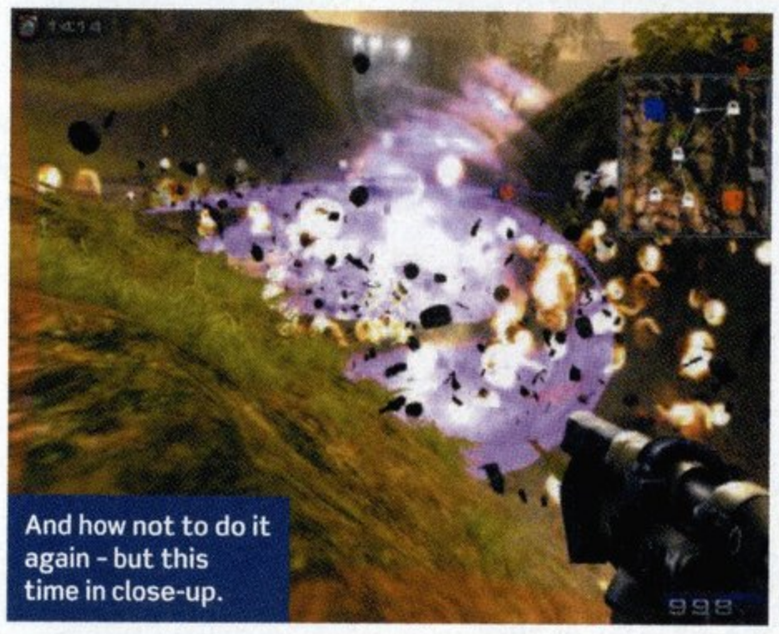
"The Gauss Gun jump at the beginning of Xen was the hardest to pull off. I had to hit the small healing pool on the floor. Landing in water takes the sting out of drops, and falling from that height would mean an instant death otherwise. In order to hit the healing pool, I had to start a curve in the air at just the right moment. Finding that moment was very hard because there was hardly anything on the screen to orientate. It took more than 100 attempts."

MOST SKILLFUL





Perfectly executed, spectacular stunt action: how not to do it.



And how not to do it again - but this time in close-up.

Enjoy cunning stunts

Meet the fall guys of gaming

Gamers have always strived to produce the spectacular. For years it was that unlikely killing spree or insane rocket jump… then came vehicles, and the real stuntmen came out to play.

For this tribe of gamers, there is no fragging or flag capturing. Pulling off the most ridiculous gaming acts and posting their movies and screenshots online is where it's at. You couldn't move for crazy Warthog exploit movies once *Halo* was released, and now the craze is spreading. The first custom map built for *Far Cry* was a dedicated stunt island strewn with ramps.

New mods like *Stunts!* for *Battlefield 1942* and *Vietnam* (**http://stunts.str8dog.com**) allow these mavericks to throw themselves and their wheels into the air via explosives, attempting to hit battleships from the beach in a four-man jeep. A similar mod for *UT2004* can be found at **www.stunthq.com**.

CULTURE STUNT PLAY

Here you can download a mutator that unlocks vehicles on all maps, then lavishes them with extra health and stunt goodies. There's even an official server to join with a stunt-friendly map rotation.

And if this sounds too intense, you can always assume the role of voyeur and take in some of the hundreds of stunt movies being produced. Okay, so most of them have abhorrent skate-metal soundtracks, but if you close your ears to the sounds, the sights will have you applauding.

Independence daze

Aliens invade the city of spandex

On April 22, the last day of the *City of Heroes* beta test, a message was broadcast:

"RIKTI INVASION WARNING! Intelligence sources believe that the Rikti will try a major strike on April 22nd from 7pm to 9pm (CDT). All heroes are asked to be present in the City Zones during this period to defend Paragon City."

As news of the imminent extra-dimensional invasion spread, everyone stocked up on power-ups, buffed themselves up and prepared for a big old scrap. The servers were about to close down, after all – something big was surely in the pipeline. No-one was even remotely prepared for what happened next.

The skies darkened. Everyone looked up. And what they saw would put a Vogon constructor fleet to shame. The Rikti had arrived, in an Independence Day-style UFO. As the aliens poured out, the supergroups mustered and battle was met. The fighting was fierce; great numbers fell on both sides. In a fit of despair, a number of heroes committed suicide by throwing themselves from a high-rise block.

At last, the alien threat was brought low. When the servers powered down, it was to the sound of jubilation.

■ **www.cityofheroes.com**

SNAPSHOTS

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

A zombie in lederhosen. That's pretty damn sick.

Type /dance then hit Return in the brilliant *World of Warcraft*, and your character cuts the rug. Each race has its own kind of shimmy, but it's the Undead moves that really tickle our funny bones: a blend of crotch-rock air-guitar and death-metal sign-of-the-devil moshing.

While passing the tavern in the Undead hamlet of Brill recently, your correspondent heard a yell of "Table dancing!" Nipping inside, he discovered a fellow zombie moshing on the table to the noisy approval of his peers. An orgy of diseased limb-flailing ensued...

ELECTIONEERING

Mr President for President*

*And other online absurdities

Were the Alphaville elections rigged by The Mob?

The race was hard-fought. Ashley Richardson, a schoolgirl from Florida, stood on an anti-griefer, anti-Mob platform, vowing to limit the damage troublemakers could do to honest citizens. The incumbent, Mr President, a 21-year-old airline ticketing agent, advocated a laissez-faire attitude, arguing that even troublemakers "had as much a right to enjoy Alphaville as everyone else." But then, he would say that. Rumours are rife that the leader of the free world is in the pocket of JC Soprano, the city's most powerful mafia don.

Welcome to the world of *The Sims Online* politics. This is the second year that the residents of Alphaville – first and most controversial of *Sims Online* communities – have gone to the virtual polls to elect their president. Last year's event was a cakewalk: the winner, the appropriately-named Mr President, was, quite literally, made for the job. This time around he had to stand against Ashley Richardson, nominated from four presidential candidates to run against him.

During his tenure, Mr President has been responsible for developing the Alphaville Government, writing a constitution, commissioning an Alphaville flag, and opening new government offices. Along with providing essential services such as a police and fire department, Alphaville can now boast a functioning replica of the CIA, a Federal Bureau and a standing army. It's a fully functional, self-governing community.

Mr President engages his constituents in post-election-night fun and games.

There was just one problem. According to chat-logs released by JC Soprano to Alphaville's own newspaper, the Alphaville Herald, Mr President failed to accurately count the number of votes logged at the online ballot box. Naughty Mr President.

The allegations of vote rigging were first raised by Ashley, after her supporters reported being unable to log their votes. At around the same time, JC Soprano released records of an instant message conversation where Mr President appeared to take Soprano up on his offer of "allowing non-unique votes" – essentially flooding the polls.

The Sims Online is the game where nothing is ever meant to happen. In-game events, supported by Maxis and EA, are rare to the point of extinction: the *Sims Online* community is left to get on with life as best it can. Inhabitants amuse themselves by forming and breaking relationships, talking, hanging out. It's a game of small-scale political strategy: where popularity has a direct influence on your status. Having more links to friends allows you to run larger, more prestigious 'lots' – your property within the game.

Then there's the commerce. The Simolean – Sims currency – has a real-world market value that can be tracked via eBay. Money earned in-game is exchanged for cold hard currency. Before Maxis cottoned on to the process, some players even managed to automate the in-game money-making process, leaving bots running overnight to accumulate wealth. The result: vast

INTERVIEW

The President Speaks

Alphaville's Chief of Staff answers our questions

PCGA Did you rig the election? Why would JC Soprano think you would even consider the possibility?
The Presidential elections were not rigged in any way, nor was it even considered as an option. If JC found out that I did rig the election, he'd have the evidence to get me out of office.

PCGA But in the chat logs you admitted to not counting votes in the primaries.
Unfortunately, one can't read the inflection of the words typed. I said to JC "there was like 800 votes, but only 300+ were unique. Seth and Ashley had a ton of duplicate votes near the end... more for Seth, I think... I was starting not to count them, LOL.." It was meant as a joke.

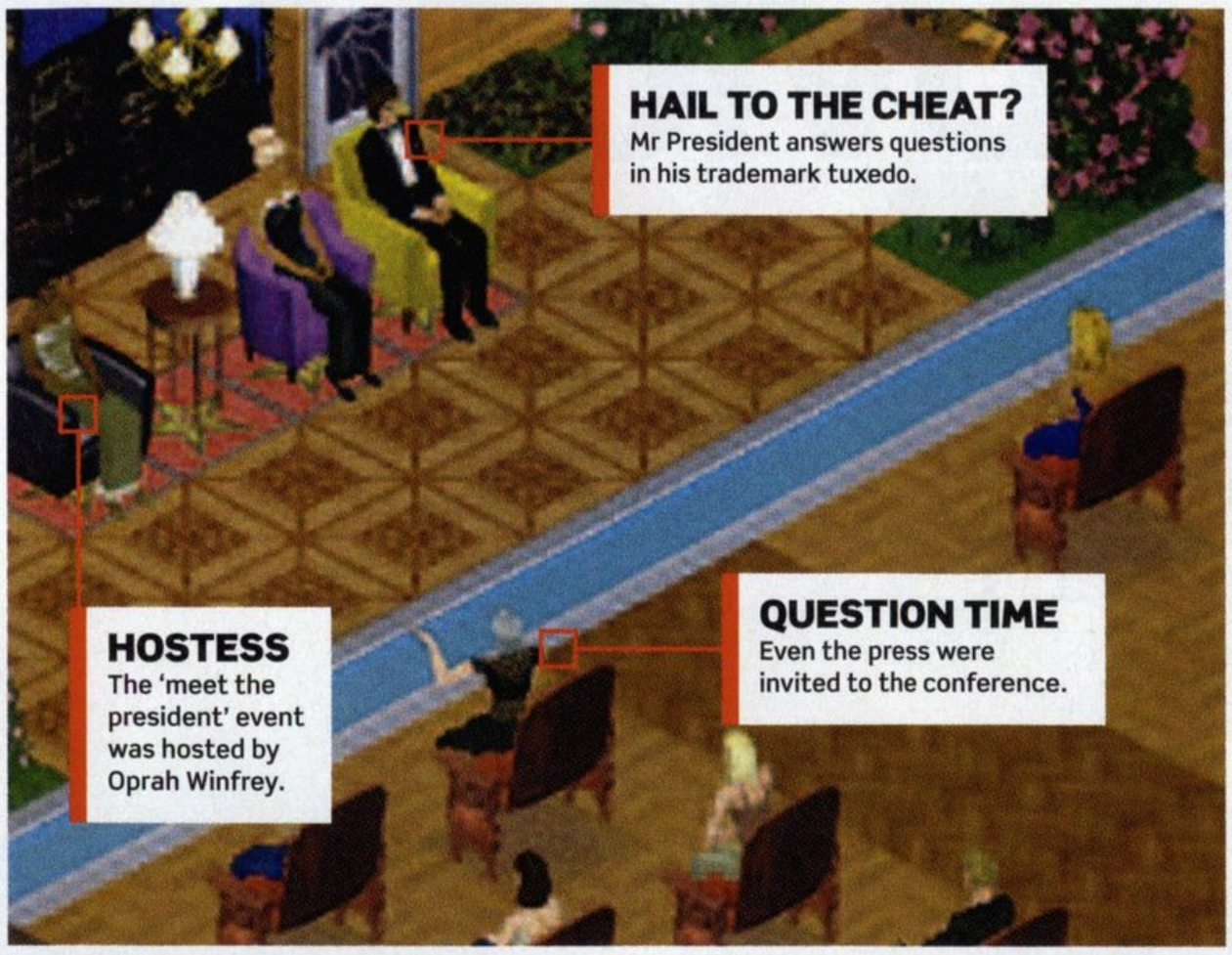
PCGA Is it time to cut all in-game ties with JC Soprano?
Until JC Soprano leaves Alphaville, as President of the Alphaville Government, I cannot cut all in-game ties to JC.

PCGA Why stand for a second term as Alphaville President?
In addition to being the 'commander and chief' of the Alphaville Government, being the President is an influential, role model type position. Lots of Sims will look up to you, and it's your responsibility to make fair judgments in the interest of ALL Citisims of Alphaville. If the Alphaville Government doesn't have a strong, level-headed leader, it cannot continue to operate. It will fall.

PCGA What does the President do?
Being President means appointing leaders and directors to the several departments of the Alphaville Government, keeping a close watch on them, while constantly evaluating their performance and relations with the community. I also make sure Citisims' questions are answered, suggestions heard... Everything I do is to keep Alphaville running smoothly.

The Alphaville Government will not discriminate because of skin tone, clothing or appearance nor treat anyone unfairly because of past mafia, gang or scammer ties. Even those reformed members of Alphaville are Citisims and play a part of the community.

PCGA Mr President, thank you.


HAIL TO THE CHEAT?
Mr President answers questions in his trademark tuxedo.
HOSTESS
The 'meet the president' event was hosted by Oprah Winfrey.
QUESTION TIME
Even the press were invited to the conference.

piles of Simoleons available to the highest bidder.

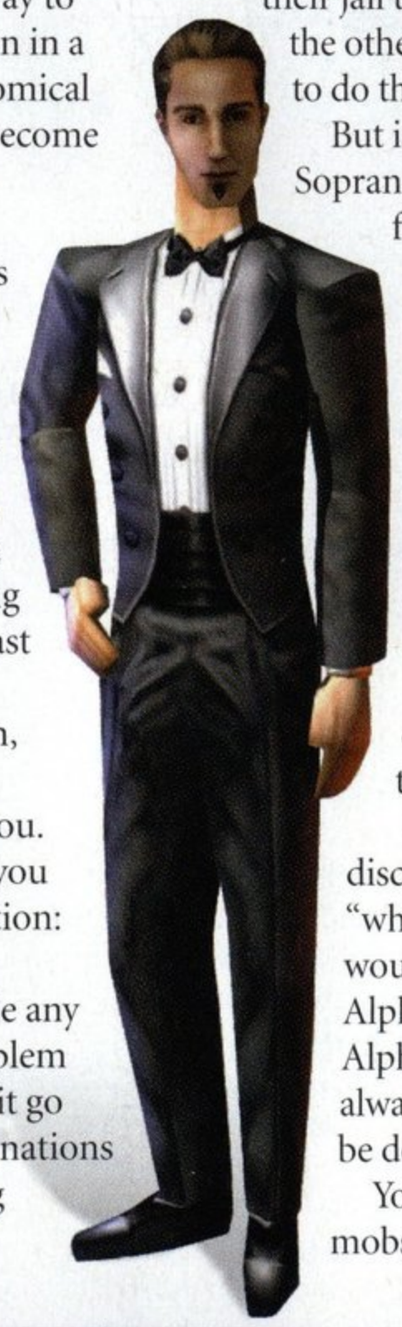
It's the perfect breeding ground for mob rule. The Sims Mafia, run by JC Soprano himself, answers to no one, not even the elected government. All the police force can offer the citizens of Alphaville is a uniformed presence. The mobsters continue their business untouched.

What is that business? "We can do just about anything from minor assaults to whacking your sim," says Soprano. "Anything the mob can do in real life we have found a way to mirror it in some way. Even in a game without guns and comical violence we find ways to become even more 'gangster'."

If that sounds preposterous, Soprano has some chilling words. "What may seem absurd to you puts money in my pockets. Yes. Real money." Soprano's website, (**www.thesimmafia.com**), lists a veritable Mafioso shopping list. Soprano charges at least 60,000 Simoleons for an hour's worth of protection, providing two suited and booted heavies to escort you. The same price also buys you an hour's worth of mediation: you can request a mafia endorsed sit-down to settle any major disputes. If the problem still lingers you can make it go away permanently: assassinations are charged at a whopping 500K, with 50% payable upfront. How? Soprano keeps his methods vague, "A hit involves a certain level of social engineering. While we can't actually kill off your Sim, we can make you kill him or her yourself. Simicide if you will." And Simoleons still make ready eBay sales: typically, 100K in Simoleons is worth around four Earth pounds.

We can make you kill your Sim. Simicide.

Under Mr President's tenure, the Sims Mafia has undoubtedly flourished. In a demonstration of good faith Soprano has even co-operated with the Feds. "I make my members do their jail time, to show Alphaville and the other players that we are willing to do the time for our crimes."

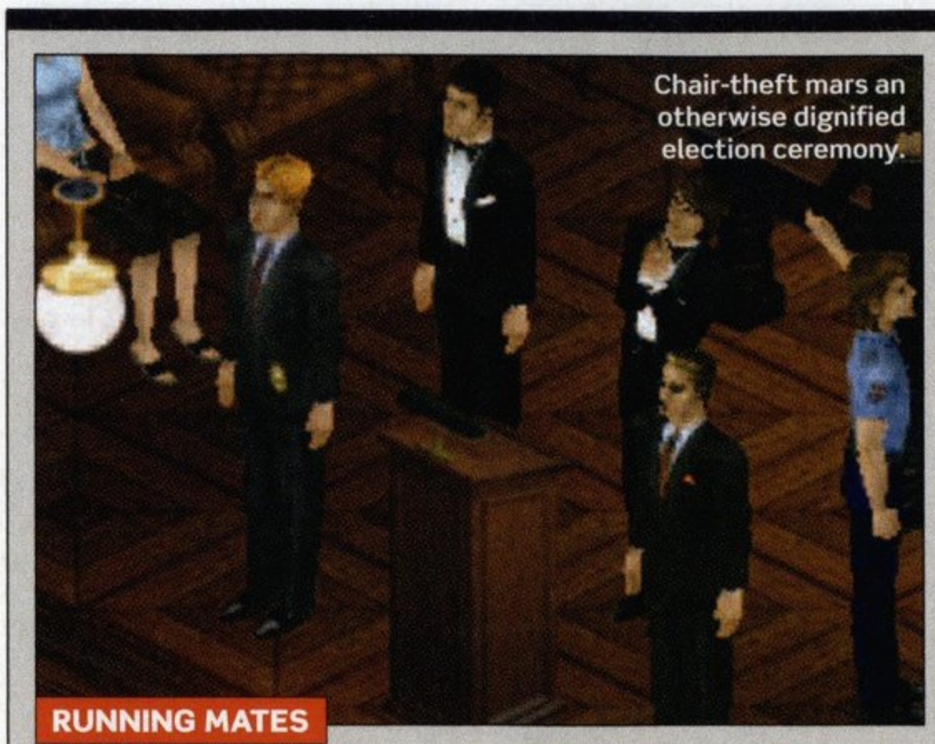


But is it appropriate that JC Soprano and Mr President are close friends, to the extent that the mob is invited to organise the ballot? "Security was the main issue," says Soprano. "That's why I was originally contracted to advise on the elections, to make sure security was tight. While it was talked about with the President about how one could rig the election it was done so in a national security type of way."

Soprano freely admits that discussions took place about "what candidates if elected would pose a problem for the Alphaville government and Alphaville." But, he insists, it was always "in regards to what could be done, not would be done."

You can take the self-confessed mobster's word for it.

TIM EDWARDS



RUNNING MATES

Presenting the Candidates

And the five nominees are...

CANDIDATE	POLICY	RESULT
Mr President	A government should be seen and not heard. Mob rule is A-OK! The incumbent also wished to reduce the size of his government.	Mr President pulled in 469 votes in the final round. He retains his office, and is set to guide the citizens of Alphaville for another year.
Ashley Richardson	'Adopt a Newbie' centres to hand out advice to players on who and what to watch out for, along with a greater selection of official 'events'.	Ashley was defeated in the final election, with 411 votes, despite the support of her local, real-world newspaper, the Florida-based Palm Beach Post.
Seth Galloway	Reduce the size and role of Alphaville's police force. In reality, Alphaville's police force has little power in the face of an expanding mob presence.	Seth lost to Richardson, in the second Primary, 223 votes to 138. Seth couldn't find a convincing answer to Mr President's propaganda.
Jason Sim	More funding for schools. Jason advocated creating learning centres, where Simizens could receive in-game help with their homework.	Jason barely registered in the election, amassing a mere 32 votes. Clearly, the kids don't want to be reminded of their day school.
Jinjo	Hit back at the griefers and scammers. Jinjo advocated taking action against Scammers, hitting them where it hurts: in the pocket.	Jinjo was defeated in the first round of primaries, accumulating 50 votes, despite his popular policies. Expect to see his ideas adopted.

EXPERT ADVICE ON GAMING PCS

How to keep your PC fragging fast and furious

BY MICHAEL ABOLINS

Really, where do you begin? You want a PC that's powerful enough to run the latest games (and those of the near future) at high-quality settings without the whole shebang grinding to a juddering halt, but where do you start? It's entirely possible to buy a PC today that will be obsolete in six months' time. It doesn't have to be that way, though. Arm yourself with a little knowledge and you can ensure that your PC is future-proof, that what you buy today can be upgraded and tweaked over the next couple of years to keep pace with games development.

ON THE DISCS Find handy tools and apps to keep your PC humming along nicely > Toolkit: Performance.

There are several criteria that any potential gaming PC must meet to ensure that it'll be a long-term performer. And just to dispel a myth, the graphics card isn't the first priority. The most important parts of your gaming PC are the processor (CPU) and motherboard Hardly the most glamourous pieces of technology, but every facet of your PC's performance is dependent in some way on one or both of those components. You can have the most powerful graphics card in the world, but it won't do you a jot of good if it's reliant on a crusty old processor and a flagging motherboard. The good news? There's never been a more exciting time in the development of either.

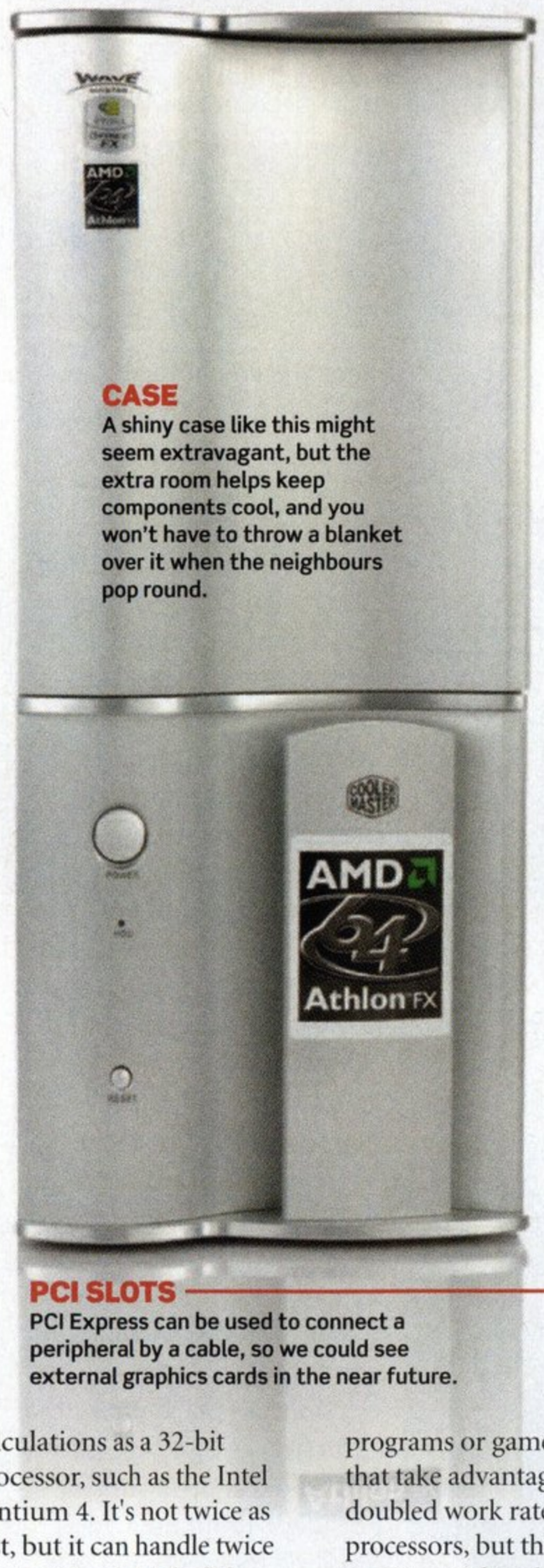
You can ensure your PC is future-proof

AMD is breaking barriers with its 64-bit processors, while Intel is continuing to ramp up the gigahertz with ever-faster clock speeds. The question of whether to buy an AMD or Intel processor is as big a concern as ever, particularly with Intel's recent announcement that they're about to launch 64-bit processors for the home and will adopt a new naming convention to go with it.

The hype surrounding 64-bit processors is wholly justified – they will bring about the next big leap in PC performance. A 64-bit processor (like the AMD Athlon FX-53 installed in the Tiny PC in Money Pit over the page) is able to handle twice the amount of calculations as a 32-bit processor, such as the Intel Pentium 4. It's not twice as fast, but it can handle twice the workload. And while 32-bit processors can only address a maximum of 4Gb of RAM, 64-bit processors are capable of addressing a wallet-worrying 18 billion Gb.

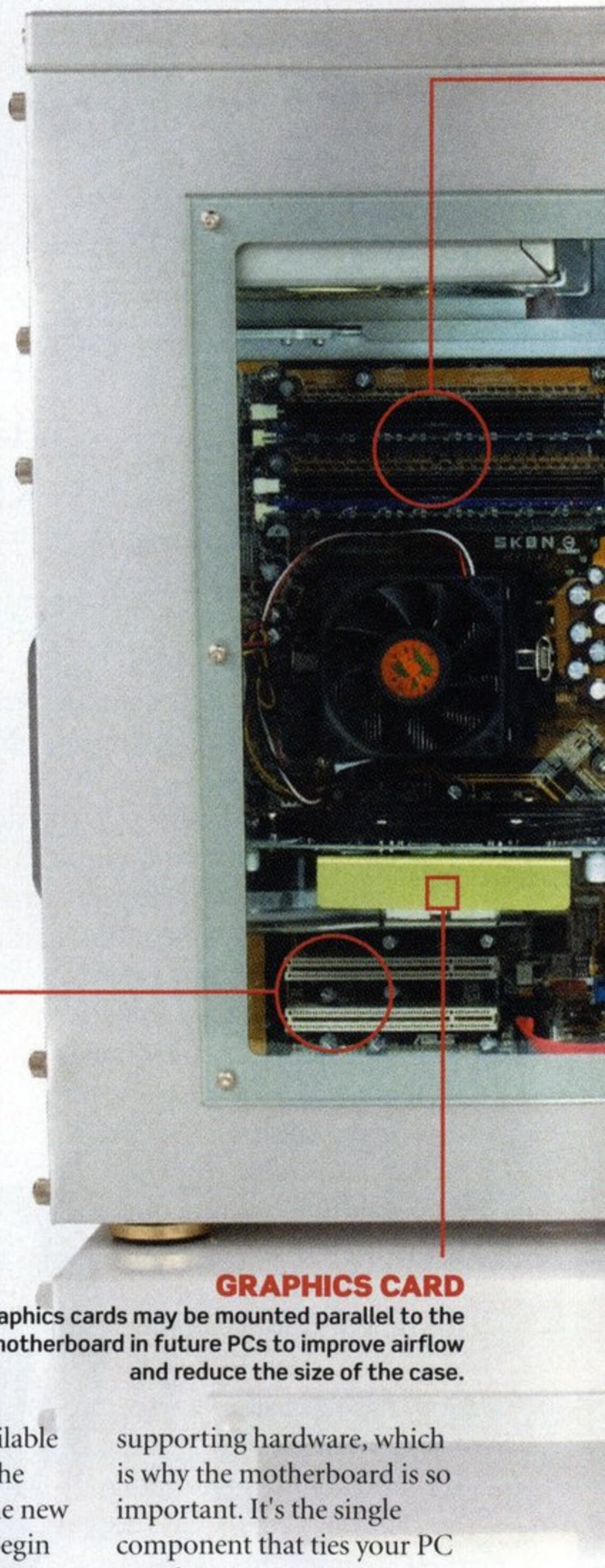
This power makes AMD's Athlon FX-53 the gaming processor of the moment, and of the near-future too, as you'll be prepared for the new 64-bit software as it's released. Right now, there aren't any significant 64-bit programs or games available that take advantage of the doubled work rate of the new processors, but they'll begin to arrive within the next 12 months (Microsoft recently released a 64-bit version of Windows XP). Crucially, the FX-53 will run both current 32-bit and future 64-bit apps. A 32-bit processor won't run 64-bit software, while more disturbingly, a pure 64-bit chip won't run 32-bit software and may mean finally retiring your old game collection.

Still, all this power is redundant without the supporting hardware, which is why the motherboard is so important. It's the single component that ties your PC together. Your processor, RAM, hard drive, graphics card and sound card are all dependant upon your motherboard and, specifically, your motherboard's connections. We're currently in the midst of a connection revolution. The bottlenecks that have previously limited performance improvements are being unblocked at last. Already we're witnessing the phasing out of the Parallel



CASE
A shiny case like this might seem extravagant, but the extra room helps keep components cool, and you won't have to throw a blanket over it when the neighbours pop round.

PCI SLOTS
PCI Express can be used to connect a peripheral by a cable, so we could see external graphics cards in the near future.



GRAPHICS CARD
Graphics cards may be mounted parallel to the motherboard in future PCs to improve airflow and reduce the size of the case.

SYSTEMS README

>WHY AM I HERE?
You want a PC that can run today's games well, but it should be able to handle tomorrow's games too.

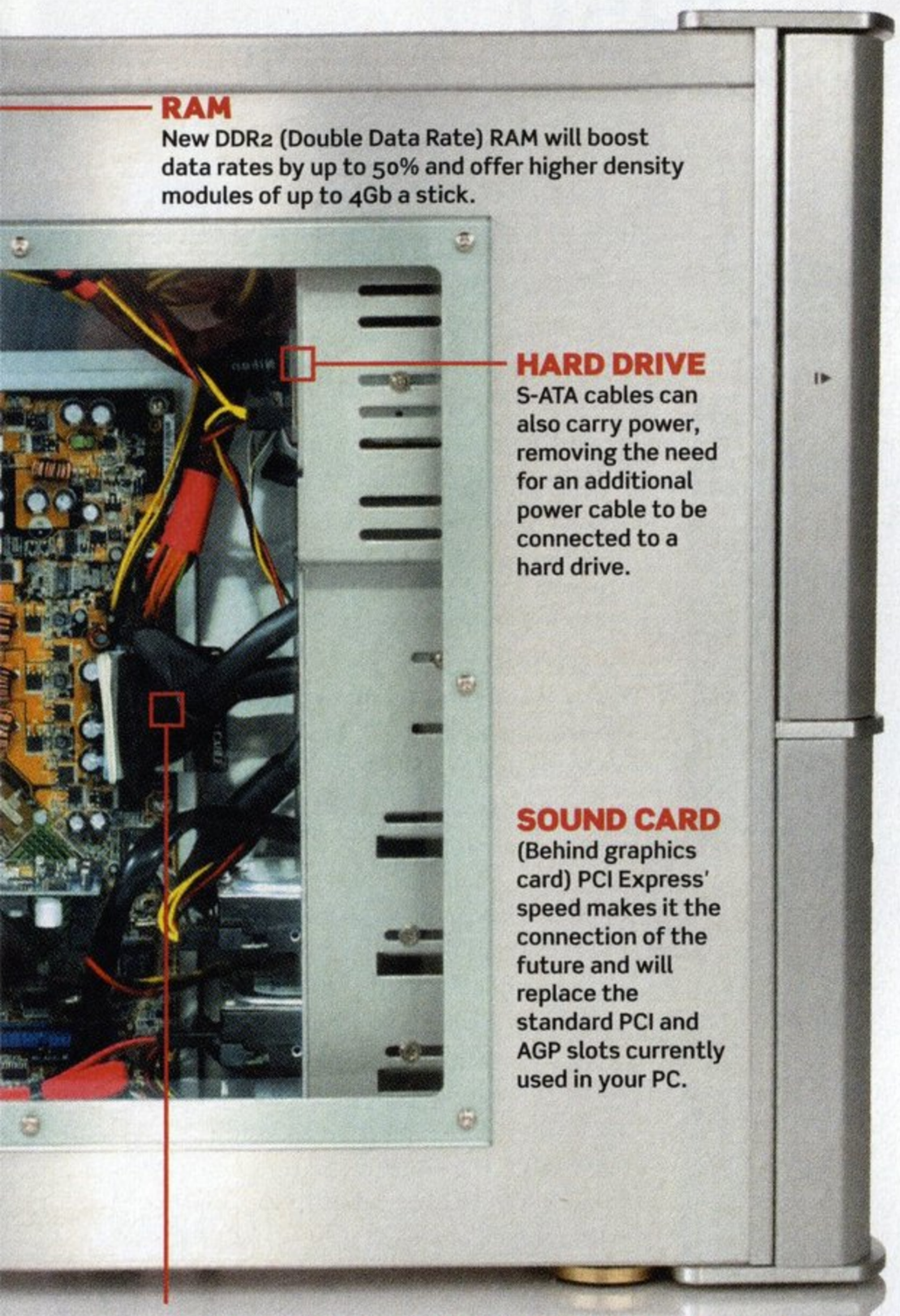
>IS IT RISKY?
If you don't have future-proof hardware there's the very real possibility of social rejection, insanity after observing a friend's faster system and new games running slowly.

>CAN I DO IT?
Yes, providing that using a screwdriver is not beyond your mental grasp. Video cards are easy to upgrade and installing memory doesn't even involve a tool.

>SELL IT TO ME...
Keep reader our hardware section to find out whether you should be buying a new PC or using the latest tech developments to make your system go faster.

PC GAMES ADDICT DICTIONARY THE OED OF GAMING

AGP› Accelerated Graphics Port, provides graphics cards with fast access to your PC's RAM.
Bit› Single unit of data, either I or O (on or off). The foundation of all computation.
Data rate› The amount of data that can be sent through a communications circuit in a second. This figure effectively governs the performance of any component.
PCI› Peripheral Component Interconnect: a standard connection for installing peripherals such as modems and sound cards.
PCI-SIG› PCI Special Interest Group, industry body (including Intel, AMD and nVidia) in charge of developing and managing the PCI standard.
PCI-X› Not to be confused with PCI Express, PCI-X is a slower, alternative connection spec with a data rate of just 533Mb per second. Rubbish.


RAM
New DDR2 (Double Data Rate) RAM will boost data rates by up to 50% and offer higher density modules of up to 4Gb a stick.
HARD DRIVE
S-ATA cables can also carry power, removing the need for an additional power cable to be connected to a hard drive.
SOUND CARD
(Behind graphics card) PCI Express' speed makes it the connection of the future and will replace the standard PCI and AGP slots currently used in your PC.
RIBBON CABLES CONNECTING HARD DRIVE
S-ATA cables are far smaller than the ribbon cables they replace, improving the cooling airflow through the case and so enabling other components to run faster.

ATA (or IDE) connections that linked hard drives and optical drives to the motherboard via those bulky ribbon cables. They've been replaced by the much more efficient and airflow-friendly Serial ATA interface.

The consequent improvements to performance from S-ATA are nothing compared to what you'll see from PCI Express, though. PCI Express will take over from the standard PCI and AGP slots currently residing in your PC, and will deliver data rates that will enable the graphics and sound cards of the future to finally deliver that real-life gaming experience we're always hearing so much about. Much improved graphics and truly immersive audio will be possible, thanks to a peak data transfer rate close to 1Gb per second – the current PCI standard boasts a comparatively paltry 133Mb per second. AGP 8x manages a more respectable peak rate of just over 2Gb but the PCI-SIG, the industry body in charge of the PCI standard in all its flavours, is confident that PCI Express will reach a peak transfer rate of around 16Gb per second as it evolves.

That potential is the reason why both ATI and nVidia are championing PCI Express. In fact, the next generation of high-end cards that ATI and nVidia will be releasing this summer already incorporate the architecture necessary to move from AGP and onto PCI Express. It's unlikely we'll need to make the move quite yet, but if you can, wait until the Express-compatible motherboards arrive towards the end of 2004 before buying a new PC.

The developments arriving in the next nine months are bigger than we've seen in quite some time and will, we guarantee, be worth the wait.

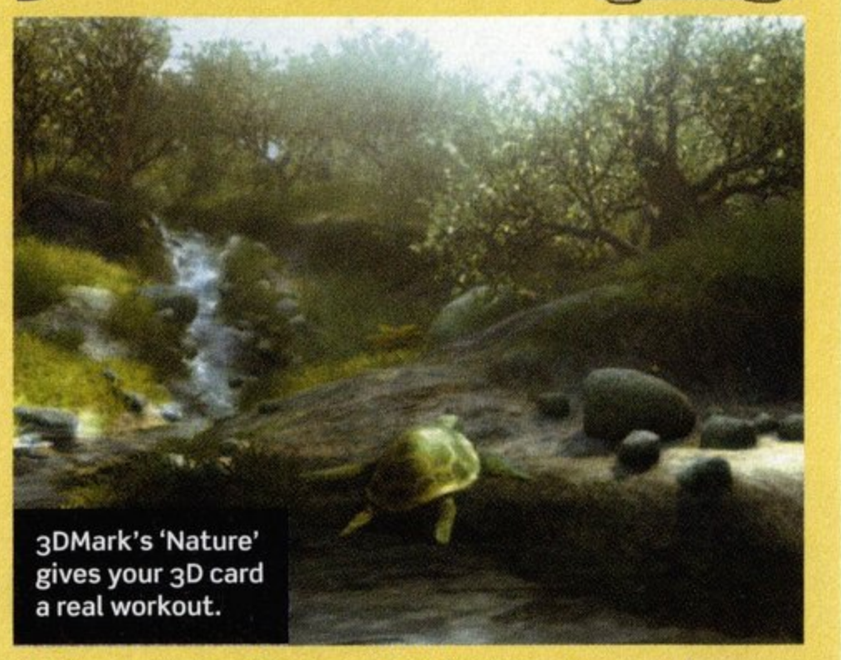
Want a particular tech topic covered in PC GAMES ADDICT?
Then mail your request to:
pcga@derwenthoward.com.au

WHAT NEXT...?

- **Need a PC transfusion now? Then buy the winner of our hardcore gaming PCs round-up, over the page.**
- Hang on for PCI Express to arrive for big performance boosts.
- **Download, install and benchmark your PC to gauge its current capabilities.**
- Compare your current PC's scores with those of the rigs in our round-up.
- **Investigate your current components and see if your PC is future-proof. Have you got an S-ATA connection, for instance?**

MASTERCLASS

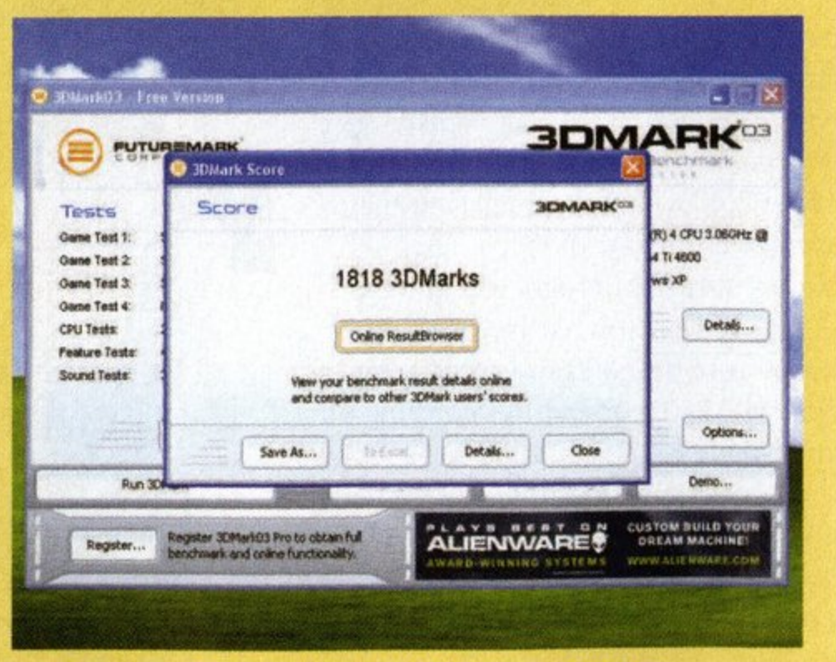
How to... Benchmark your PC


3DMark's 'Nature' gives your 3D card a real workout.

1 Benchmarks subject your PC's hardware to a set of standardised tests that are designed to provide an indication of relative performance in the form of a score. The entire system or individual components can be subjected to specific tests. 3DMark will give us a guide to how powerful a graphics card is, for example. Because the tests are standardised, you can directly compare different PCs.

UT2003/4 is an ideal 'real world' PC benchmark.

2 You can download most benchmarks from the internet: www.futuremark.com hosts 3DMark03 and PCMark04. www.aquamark.com is the self-titled home of AquaMark3, while UMark, which makes for easy benchmarking with the *UT2003/4* demos can be had from www.unrealmark.com. It's good to run a few benchmarks as each will work in a slightly different way, providing a good overall assessment of your PC.



3 Benchmarking graphics cards? Keep every other component in your PC the same to ensure fair testing and remember that graphical performance is also reliant upon your processor, motherboard and RAM, among other things. You can compare your scores and system spec with other gamers at the sites above. It's a hefty download, but we've included it on the DVD this issue for your convenience.

THE NV40 ARRIVES!

nVIDIA releases it's new flagship product

BY JERE LAWRENCE - HARDWARE EDITOR

110 Watts of fun

MSI FX6800 ULTRA $950

MSI HYPERLINK "http://www.msicomputer.com.au" www.msicomputer.com.au (02) 9748 0070

Finally, we got our hands on this mammoth piece of hardware to find out what it can really do. It took longer than expected because of a significant problem with the FX6800 (which we predicted in Issue 22's preview), namely that it draws a tremendous 110 Watts of power. If your power supply is already taxed, you will run into problems.

The first test machine featured a 430W PSU with two optical devices, one 7200 RPM HDD, one 3.5" FDD, five case fans and was completely browned out by the 6800. That's to say, when attempting to power up the machine no hard disk was recognised. There was, just not enough power for it. Ironically the second machine with only a 350W PSU but with less devices, particularly PCI cards, allowed the 6800 to start.

From the first test it could be ascertained that the FX6800 was a very fast card. Using *3D Mark 2003* we saw our highest score ever of 11,333 3D marks, 36% faster than ATi's AX800 Pro. But we have yet to see the AX800 XT, ATi's answer to the FX6800 so it's not a closed case yet. In other tests the 6800 continued to output blitzing performance and the revamp of the anti-aliasing system plus a 256 bit wide interface meant that *Unreal Tournament 2004* could be played at 1600x1200 with 8x anti-aliasing at an average frame rate of 89fps. The biggest surprise though, was that the flight sim Lock-on received a huge boost from the 6800 and could achieve 60fps at 1280x1024 with everything on and, wait for it, 4x anti-aliasing.

This amazing performance increase is primarily due to the fact that the 6800 features a 400Mhz core and 1100MHz DDR2 memory. Particular to the MSI FX6800 Ultra, its performance could be increased effectively by using dynamic overclocking technology which automatically overclocks the card monitoring it through software to keep everything stable.

KEY FEATURES

- 11,333 2003 3D Marks
- 256-bit wide interface
- 16 pixel pipelines
- 220 million transistors
- Draws 110W of power
- Takes up two PCI slots

Also responsible for the 6800's performance are 16 pixel pipelines for very fast pixel shader and texturing operations. On the pixel shader side, the 6800 is fully DirectX 9.0c compatible and supports the pixel shader 3.0 (PS 3.0) API. This will bring significant performance increases for effects in future games because under PS 2.0 program size was limited to 96 instructions, restricting and frustrating developers. PS 3.0, also referred to as Shader Model 3.0 (SM 3.0) on the other hand, allows for 32,768 instructions and is significant because it gives developers the ability to make looping and branched pixel shader programs (i.e. much more graphically amazing special effects.)

One area where nVIDIA have a big advantage over ATi is in their implementation of floating point (FP) colour (floating points are fractional numbers and therefore more precise). With 32bit FP colour the 6800 offers better colour precision over the Radeon range which is limited to 24bit FP. However, the downside to nVIDIA's use of FP is that programmers are given two options; either use 32bit FP colour which requires more memory for effective performance or 16 bit FP colour. As there's no middle ground of 24bit FP colour, we assume that nVIDIA are going to push developers hard to adopt 32bit FP.

Overall the FX6800 is a very fast video card that offers a huge and dramatic boost in performance for any machine lucky enough to have one. Except that luck unfortunately is going to be a factor in installation because of the amount of power the card draws and its ability to brown out a system. This limits the card to experienced users who can capably diagnose and modify their system if need be.

PCGAMES ADDICT

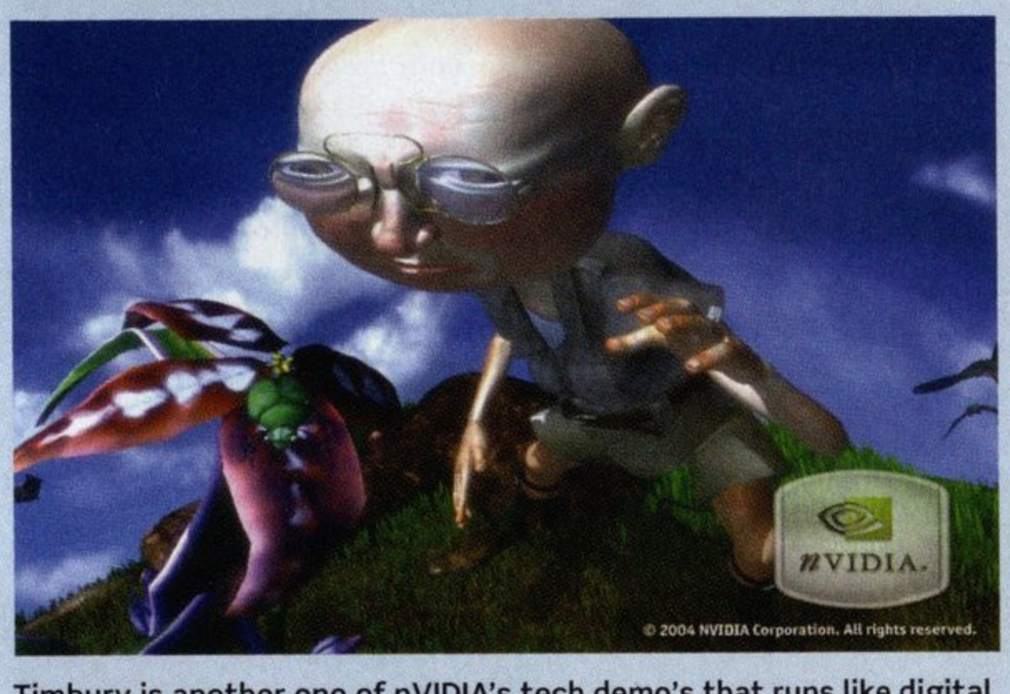
PERFORMANCE 95%
VALUE 83%

90%

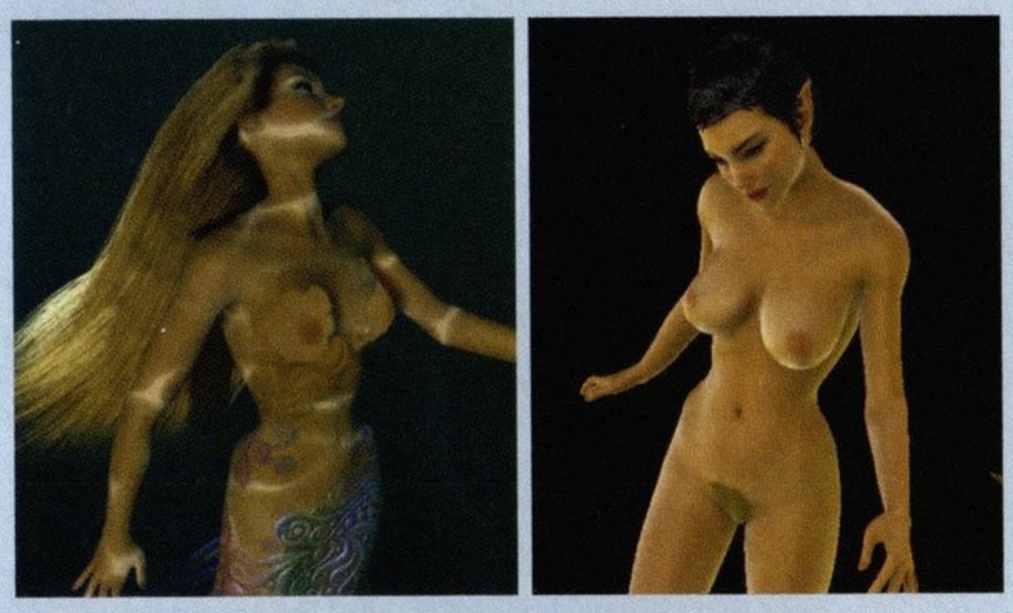
›It's fast but troublesome

The 6800 in action

Nalu is nVIDIA's new tech demo mascot. Amazingly well rendered, the hair which uses a combination of the vector and pixel shader is lit and flows dynamically.



Timbury is another one of nVIDIA's tech demo's that runs like digital scenes from modern movies. Note the clever pixel shader effects of the glasses that magnify the eyes underneath.



What is it with those nVIDIA lads, and we do mean lads. Since Dawn, their fairy mascot, the models have been rendered with, umm, physical attributes. All you have to do is change one file that removes the top most textures.

Ahhh, the joys of colour. Where *Half Life 2* will be ATi optimised (24bit FP colour), this will round down to 16bit FP colour on the 6800. *Doom 3* on the other hand will use 32bit FP colour and will even "play better on nVIDIA".

Holy holograms Batman!

WIRELESS 3D VISION SYSTEM $149.95

eDimensional www.edimensional.tnmarketing.com.au

3D stereoscopic shutter glasses have been around for a long time but have yet to receive mainstream market acceptance. This is probably because no matter how cool real time 3D looks, it effectively halves the processing rate of your video card. Still there's no denying that games become a lot more immersive once you don this pair of hi-tech specs.

The way the glasses work is that when a 3D image is being rendered by your video card it is broken into two parts, a left image and a right image. When the left image is being shown a block of LCD in the glasses covers the right eye. For the right image, the left eye is blocked. Being wireless this particular pair of glasses uses IR for synchronisation and is a lot more comfortable then wired ones. That said, even if you can't see it, there is a lot of flickering occurring in front of your eyes and regular breaks have to be taken especially if feelings of dry eyes or brain-splitting headaches start to occur.

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 93%

VALUE 75%

› True 3D gaming that's wireless

89%

One big eye

LOGITECH MX 510 $85

Logitech www.logitech.com.au (02) 9648 1818

Since their inception, the Logitech MX range of mice has been the predominant choice among gamers and the wireless MX700 presently remains the most popular choice.

This new MX 510 therefore is hopefully a precursor to an upgraded wireless mouse, but for now it's only the corded offering on show. And what an offering it is – improved in almost every way over the MX500 (and the MX700) the 510 features a 5.8 megapixel/sec optical sensor that can handle 15g of acceleration, 5g more than an MX700. And it's not just the mouse's "eyes" that have been worked upon, but its brain as well.

A new CPU can process a data path of 12 bits which is 4 bits greater than the MX500/700. All translated this is one fast, responsive mouse, that contrary to popular belief, is actually more responsive than a corded mouse. Positional refresh rates are actually double that of your standard USB mouse, and there's no 'tail' to snag on anything.

We've definitely got our eye out for an MX710, should it exist.

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 94%

VALUE 75%

› Fast and responsive but corded

89%

XP3200+ friendly
GIGABYTE K7 TRITON GA-7N400 PRO 2 $150

Compuparts www.compuparts.com.au (02) 9482 2582

Starring nVIDIA's nForce 2 Ultra 400 integrated controller, this board supports dual channel architecture and DDR memory up to 400 (DDR400). Using two sticks of identical memory (2 x 256MB, 2 x 512MB, etc) performance can effectively be doubled. The AGP8x bus runs at 533MHz offering maximum throughput to the video card but can also be overclocked by upping the voltage in relatively safe increments of 0.1V.

On board I/O includes four ATA133 IDE ports and two SATA150 ports along with 5.1 surround sound. Support for RAID is included across IDE 3 and 4 and also on the SATA bus. But obviously, as there are only two SATA ports, one RAID setup will use them all up. Overclocking is well catered for with BIOS support that allows for voltage increases to the CPU, DIMM (memory) and AGP bus. Well done Gigabyte, this is an affordable high performance motherboard ideal for anyone looking for a home for their Athlon XP CPU.

PCGAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 95%
VALUE 95%
93%
› A quality board for all XP+ processors

B is for budget
BIOSTAR M7NCG MOTHERBOARD $110

Compuparts www.compuparts.com.au (02) 9482 2582

Not quite a high end board the M7NCG has a front side bus (FSB) of 333MHz and will only support CPUs up to the AMD Athlon XP 3000+. The inclusion of nVIDIA's nForce 2 chipset allows for dual channel memory architecture which effectively doubles the bus width from 64 to 128 bit for fast memory access. Memory support is however limited to DDR333 memory and lower. On-board video is the GeForce 4 MX440, a dated chipset that's pretty much useless for playing modern 3D games. Although S-video out could see this board being used as a cheap Home Theatre PC solution. Alternatively, the AGP3.0 port which runs at 8x is ideal for a high end video card.

On-board I/O is sparse with support for four IDE devices up to ATA133. Sound is included with output for six channels and there's even a 100Mbit LAN adaptor and two USB 2.0 and IEEE1394 Firewire ports. Not impressed yet, look at the price.

PCGAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 86%
VALUE 91%
87%
› Affordable, but only good for a XP3000+

Best features and "arts"
PEN DRIVE PLUS MP3 $245

PC Casegear www.pccasegear.com.au (03) 9584 7266

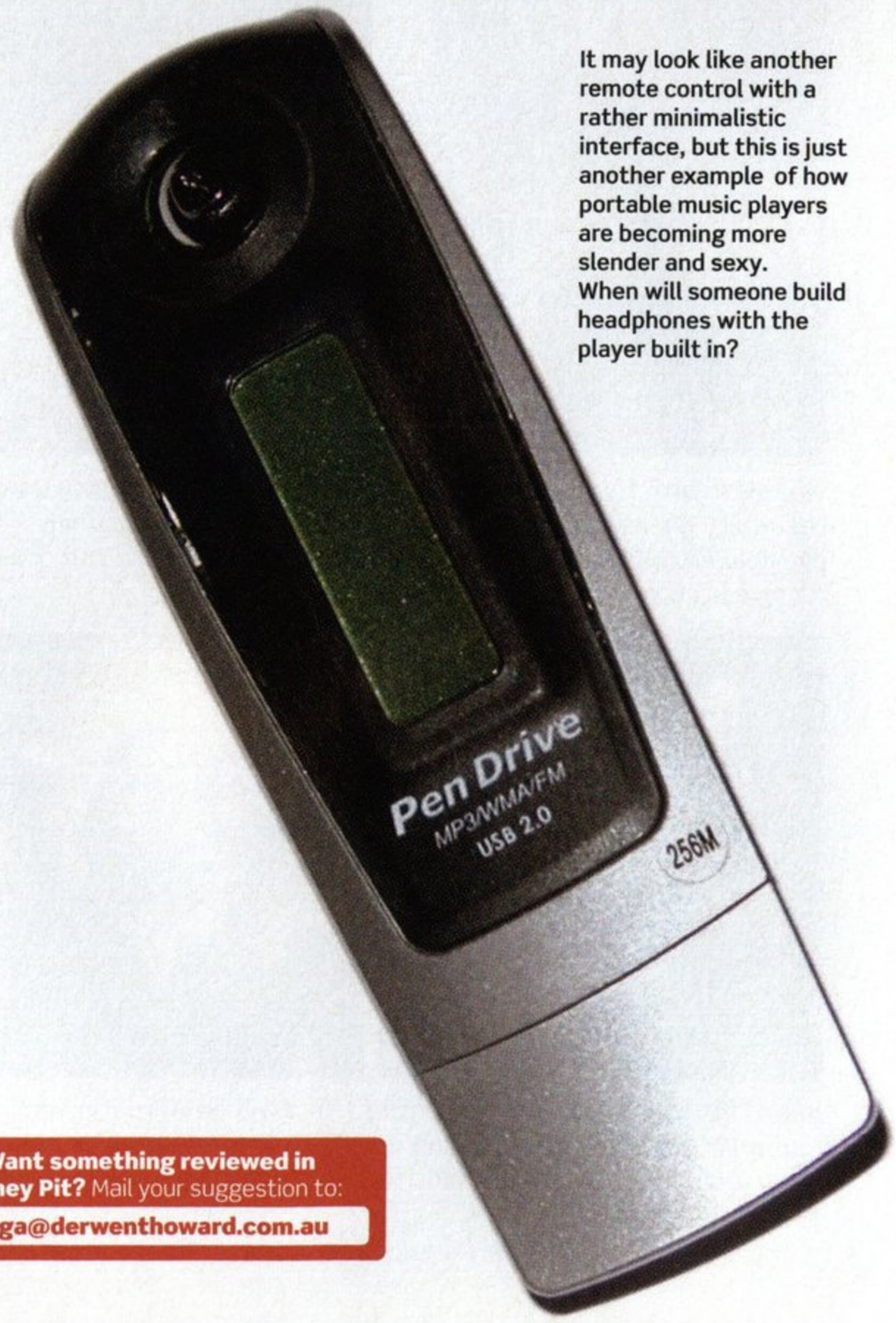
Pen Drive has been producing numerous types of USB flash drives from their manufacturing plant in Taiwan for a considerable time now and have seen healthy sales in the European market. This must have been because of their catchy slogan alluded to in the subtitle. The Pen Drive Plus is an MP3/WMA player which at first glance is remarkable because it's about 15% larger than similar offerings such as the MSI player. It does however offer 256MB of storage space which is perhaps a reason for the added girth.

KEY FEATURES
- 256MB
- 18 hour Battery life
- Uses AAA batteries
- Plays MP3, WMA

Before discussing sound quality the dilemma is that once again a relatively inferior set of headphones has been shipped with an MP3 player. They are the kind of headphones that cling onto your ears like a pair of glasses, but they don't do the player any justice, lacking volume and bass, producing tinny treble sounds. Plug in a decent set of headphones or earphones and things will start to sound infinitely better. Fortunately it's not just us that are aware of this and PC Casegear are addressing the issue by offering Sennheiser earphones with the unit at a very special price.

With the right headphones, playback is ever so slightly bass heavy but this can be adjusted to some length via the in built equaliser (which only has presets and can't be customised) and high range treble sounds don't quite reach the levels of clarity that Creative players reach. Control wise the unit is quite sparse which will make it a lot easier for some. Basically there's an on/off button and a four way clickable d-pad for volume control and track selection. However we must point out the rather unforgivable omission of the ability to skip-search within a track. This is a necessary function if you listen to continuous MP3s, i.e. live recordings and contiguous CD to MP3 dumps.

PCGAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 88%
VALUE 79%
83%
› A functional yet frill-free MP3 player



It may look like another remote control with a rather minimalistic interface, but this is just another example of how portable music players are becoming more slender and sexy. When will someone build headphones with the player built in?

Want something reviewed in Money Pit? Mail your suggestion to:
pcga@derwenthoward.com.au

Not recommended for abductees

Z - ALIEN CASE $199

PC Casegear www.pccasegear.com.au (03) 9584 7266

Weren't Greys supposed to be evil, nasty aliens that abducted you in deep dark places and did "unnatural" things involving anal probes? Well that used to be the case but now it seems that Greys are fashion symbols. And what better place to adorn the technological wizardry of the flying saucer crowd than on a PC case. With big glowing blue almond eyes and that unmistakable head (to alien buffs and abductees) this case's selling point is the constant stare of a Grey, eager to probe.

KEY FEATURES

- 400W Power supply
- 4 x 5.25" bays
- 2 open, 6 hidden 3.5" bays
- 4 x 80mm fans
- Side panel in shape of alien

Case construction is of gloss coated aluminium (ours was black but other colours are available) that wouldn't be best described as strong and being a little flimsy it will require extra care when handling. The side panel features a clear cutaway of a Grey's head and two large almond eyes made from speaker mesh material. Inside are two 120mm blue LED fans that make the alien image glow along with a front LCD panel to display the temperature. Nifty.

As a full sized ATX case there's plenty of motherboard space and with four 5.25" bays there's enough room for optical drives and panels. The real surprise though is the eight 3.5" bays; two can be used for drives while the other six can be used for hard disks. The bonus though is that two fans, a 120mm and 80mm, blow over the drives to help keep them cool. On top a flip up panel gives access to microphone in, headphones out, two USB ports and an IEEE1394 Firewire port.

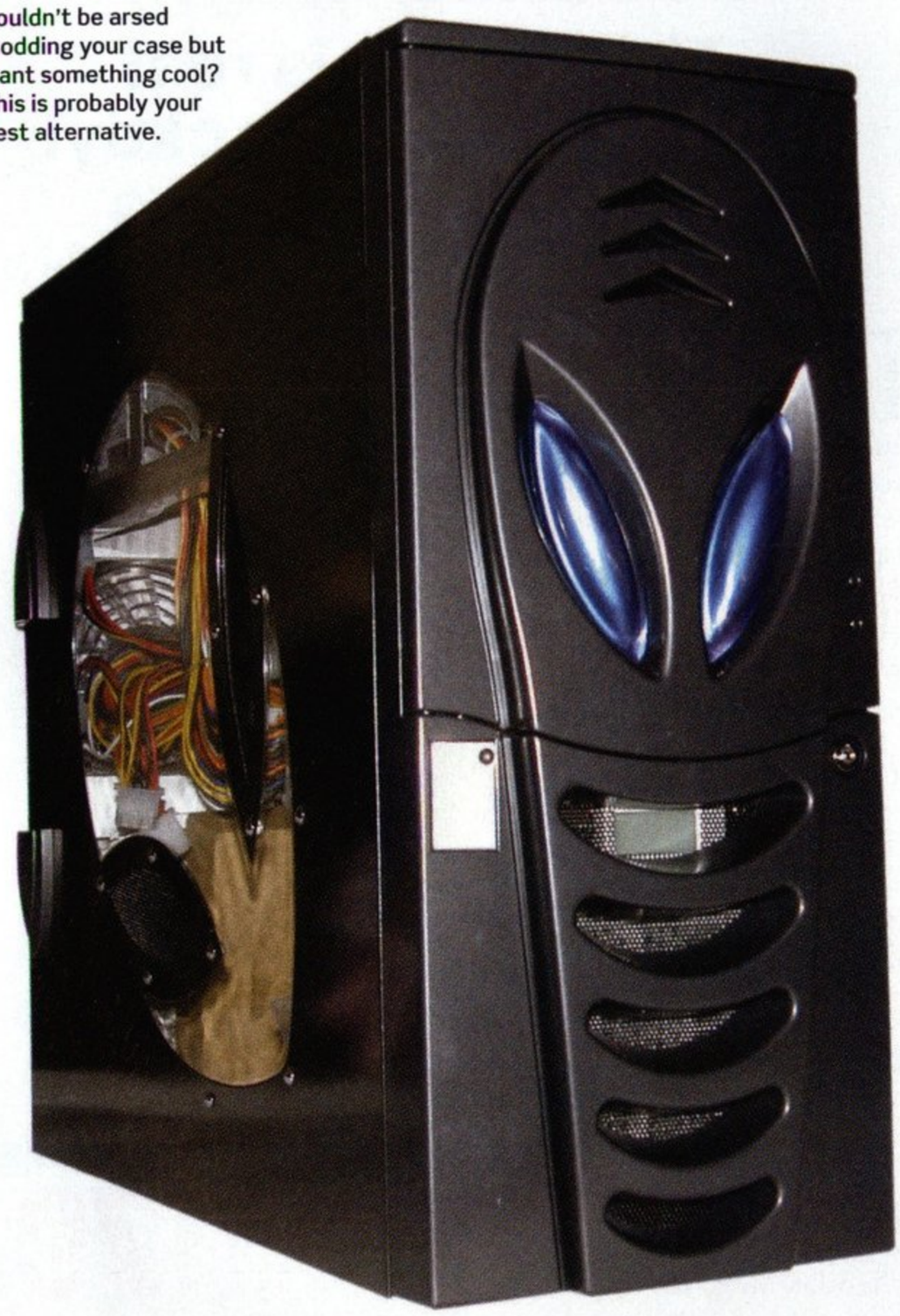
Good airflow, rounded edges and thumbscrews help raise this case above the status of gimmick. Did you expect alien tech to be inefficent?

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 89%
VALUE 85%

84%

› Amusing design with lots of room inside

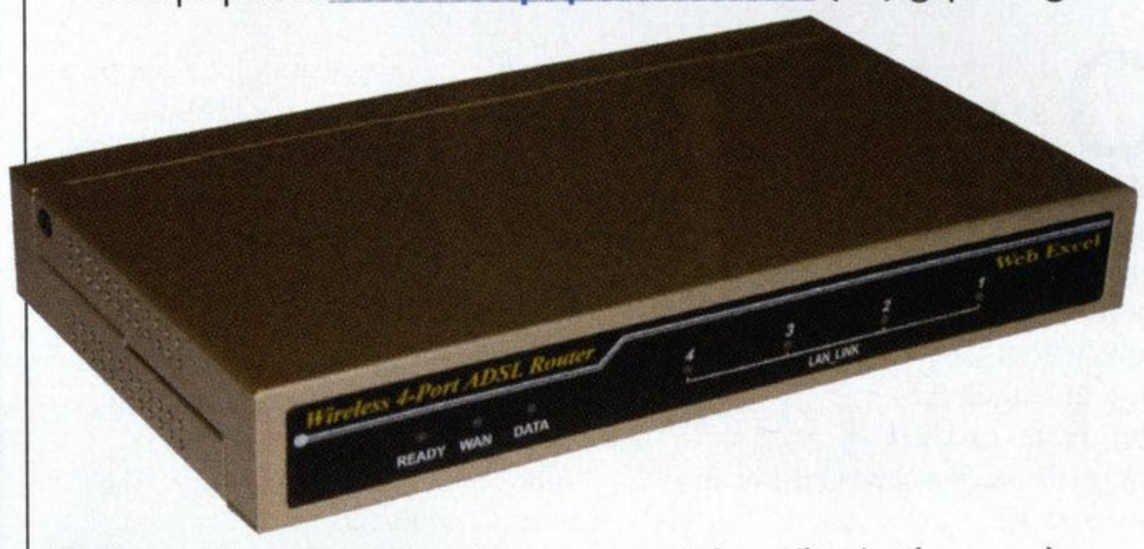


Couldn't be arsed modding your case but want something cool? This is probably your best alternative.

Now that's integrated

WEB EXCEL WIRELESS ADSL ROUTER PT3830 $85

Compuparts www.compuparts.com.au (02) 9482 2582



For an integrated device this router is remarkably small given the features it provides. It's an 8/1 (8MB down, 1MB up) ADSL modem, 4 port Ethernet hub, wireless access point (WAP) and router; yet it's only the size of an average paperback.

Connecting to the device can be achieved via Wi-Fi, Ethernet, or USB and configuration is handled by "help" software that automates the process or by the more conventional means of connecting to the router's web page. The menus however aren't designed for networking newbies.

PPPoE is supported allowing for easy connection to Australian ADSL providers. Likewise the router's DHCP functions connect other PCs on the network wired or wireless. Gaming wise the router has support for port forwarding but only one port at a time. Wireless wise the router only supports 802.11b (11Mb/sec) suitable for Internet usage and even video streaming but for obvious reasons 802.11g (54Mb/sec) would have been preferable.

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 84%
VALUE 90%

84%

› Well integrated but limited to 802.11b

Bring on the gimmicks!

EDIMENSIONAL AUDIOFX HEADSET $99.95

eDimensional www.edimensional.tnmarketing.com.au

Traditional in style the AudioFX headset features large circumaural ear couplings (the kind that goes over your ears, not in them) and rests comfortably on your head. The first round of testing produced above average results, though a little muddy when it came to high pitch sounds. But one little button on the wired remote saved the day. Called "vibration" when turning it on the entire driver unit would vibrate to accentuate the bass and offer gimmicky vibrations against the user's ears, particularly when something explodes.

Except that it really works because vibration mode creates a fuller richer bass experience that feels like a subwoofer on your ears. This thumpage however comes at the expense of a USB port which is required to power it. The unit's microphone sits comfortably away from your face with excellent and clear pick-up, however when vibration mode is engaged can interfere with the recording.

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 91%
VALUE 89%

88%

› Vibrating USB cans. Need we say more?

My PC thinks it's a nightclub

ANTEC UV LIGHT TUBE $32

PC Casegear www.pccasegear.com.au (03) 9584 7266

Of all the red, green and blue lights that have been offered to brighten up one's PC it's UV that has stolen the light (couldn't resist that pun) with its soft purple glow and ability to illuminate reactive materials (such as invisible ink and raver-trash).

At only 70mm long the tube isn't as sizable as other case lights but the upside is that it will fit in the smaller mini systems. An ideal tool for those wanting to try their hand at modding barebones machines.

Another difference is the use of bright LED lights that have their illumination maximised via the etched surface the same way that plastic crystals can refract normal light into its primaries.

Provided in the package is sticky stuff to mount the light tube and a back panel plate with a settings switch and 5-pin round d-socket for the installation of a clapper device. It's a round microphone-like receiver (which lights up with a blue LED) that can be set to light the tubes when it hears a sound.

Unfortunately though its powers of aural detection weren't exactly the best, until we put it on top of the subwoofer, then it lit in time to the beat no problem.

There's also an input volume control to help it in case you haven't got a subwoofer handy. If the clapper isn't your thing though it's just a matter of unplugging it from the bracket - round d-socket, remember?

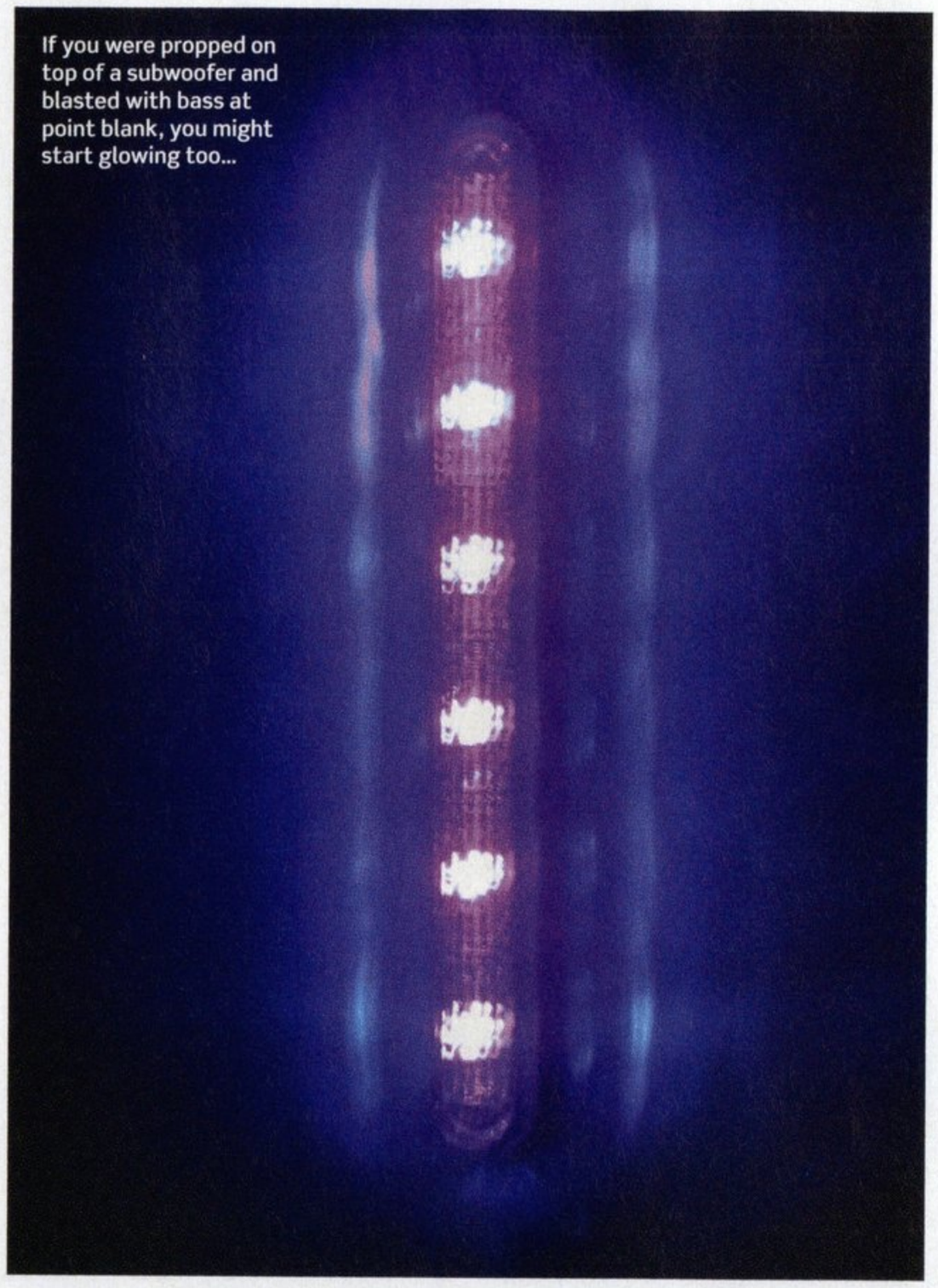
You'll want to get these settings right, otherwise your 'intelligent lighting' will be about as clued-up as the aforementioned raver-trash.

PCGAMES ADDICT

INSTALLATION EASY

›UV that thumps to the beat

85%

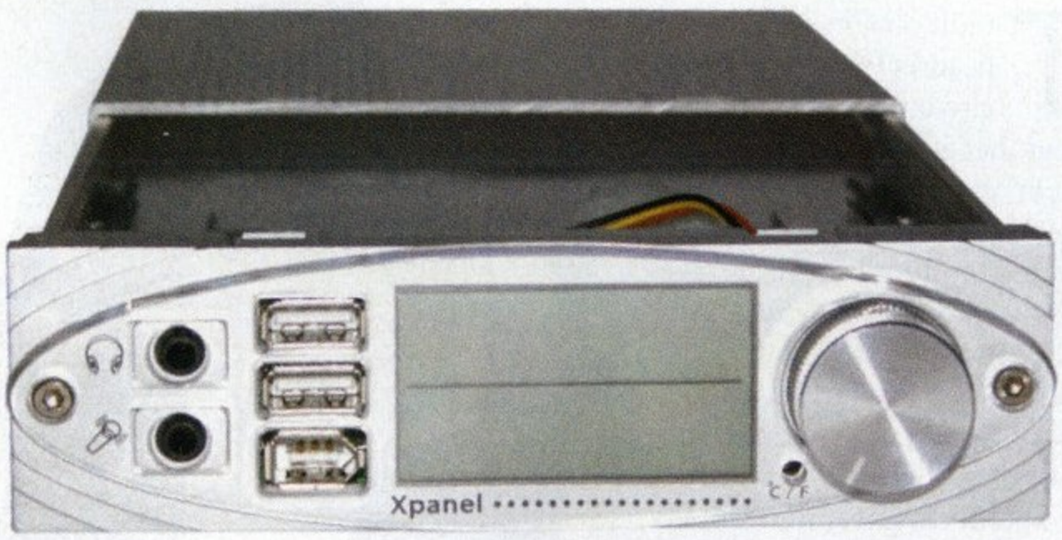


If you were propped on top of a subwoofer and blasted with bass at point blank, you might start glowing too...

A really useful front panel

X-PANEL $79

Compuparts www.compuparts.com.au (02) 9482 2582



Now here's a front panel worthy of a case, especially a modded one. Constructed of solid 2mm aluminium the panel is strong and functional with the inclusion of an 80mm blow fan to cool the hard disk that can be mounted inside. Its primary function though is to display CPU temperature and fan speed, which it does well.

Backlit with a cool blue glow the LCD display is both easy to read and access the status of up to four fans and an overheat alarm.

Further complimenting the unit are two USB ports, an IEEE1394 Firewire port, headphones out and microphone in. Much cheaper than splashing out on Audigy Platinum.

PCGAMES ADDICT

INSTALLATION EASY

›A highly functional front panel

81%

The picture is real and everything's okay!

NU DRIVE 256 $139

eDimensional www.edimensional.tnmarketing.com.au

But is it art? No not really but that doesn't detract from the fact that this is a rather nifty little drive. The Nu Drive 256 is essentially a standard 256MB USB2.0 flash disk, but what sets this device apart is that it's entirely encased in soft rubber making it the first storage device in the history of PC peripherals that can be caught off the bounce.

Another handy feature of being rubber bound is that this it's also waterproof. We're just not sure why though? Surely someone somewhere didn't render their flash drive useless by dropping it in the loo and thought "A waterproof drive, now there's an idea".

Perhaps coffee spillage was responsible, or there's an entourage of marine biologists that are calling for portable storage devices?

Whatever the reason, the Nu Drive provides opportunities for making people panic as your drop your data in the drink. Muahaha!

PCGAMES ADDICT

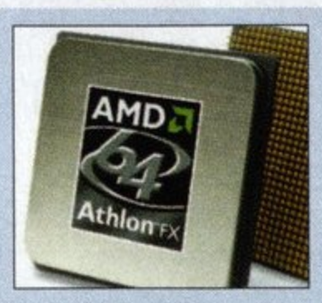
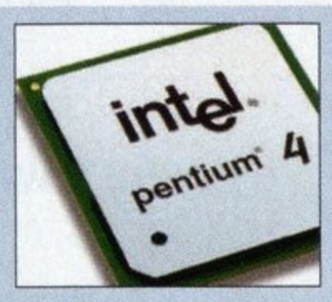
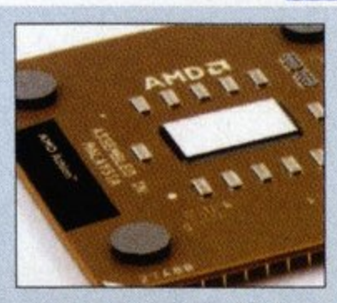
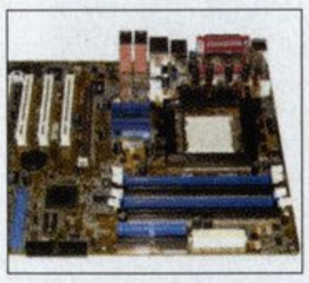
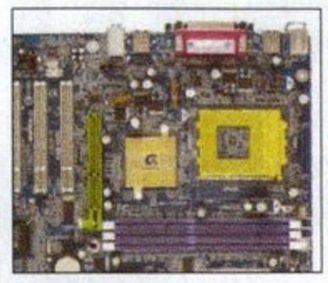
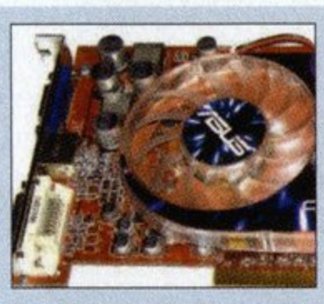
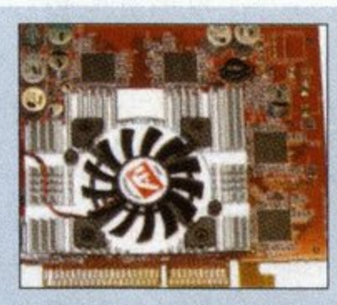
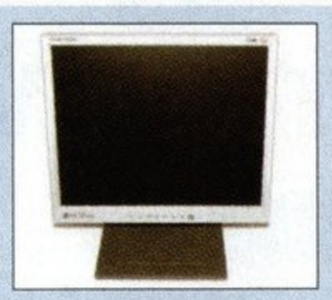
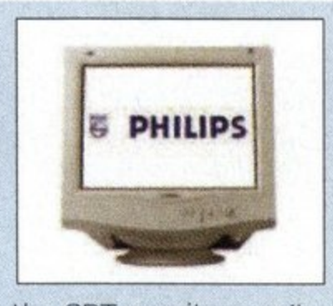
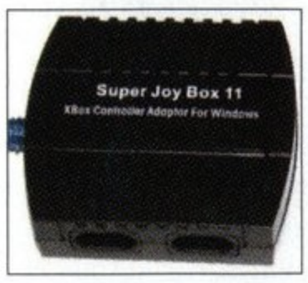
INSTALLATION EASY

›Waterproof and bouncy

79%

BIG GEAR HUNT

Your definitive guide to the best hardware money can buy

	BEST IN CLASS	MID RANGE	BUDGET CHOICE
PROCESSOR	**ATHLON FX-53** $1429 AMD www.i-tech.com.au 1 800 833 883  "Able to compute an astonishing 64 bits in one pass the FX-53 is ready for the next generation of operating systems and games"	**PENTIUM 4EE** $1479 Intel www.i-tech.com.au 1 800 833 883  "The extreme edition of Intel's Pentium 4 processor is fast, and in the right hands highly overclockable."	**ATHLON XP 3200** $340 www.compuparts.com.au (02) 9482 2582  "The XP range of processors are quite swift but will forever remain budget with its reliance on a 400MHZ FSB."
MOTHER BOARDS	**A8V DELUXE** $223 Asus www.asus.com.au (02) 9683 3488  "Dual Channel DDR, 1000Mbps LAN and 802.11g Wi-Fi, Full RAID, 8x AGP and a 2GHZ FSB. The perfect home for an FX-53"	**P4P800 DELUXE** $200 Asus www.compuprts.com.au (02) 9482 2582 "When it comes to overclocking Asus allow you to tweak just about everything. Especially true for Intel chips that can be overclocked higher."	**GA-7S748** $70 Gigabyte www.compuparts.com.au (02) 9482 2582  "Don't expect any on board additions but with a 400MHz front side bus, this board can power an XP3200+ for such a tiny price."
GRAPHICS CARDS	**FX 6800 ULTRA** $899 MSI www.msicomputer.com.au (02) 9748 0070 "Best in class because of its amazing speed the 6800 can render stunningly brilliant, vibrant scenes."	**AX800 PRO** $720 ATi www.asus.com.au (02) 8748 6755  "Only 36% slower than the 6800 this ATi card is half the size, runs a lot cooler and renders with movie like quality."	**RADEON 9600XT** $299 ATi www.ati.com 02) 8748 6755  "A budget card that performs admirably. Most noteworthy is its ability to overclock itself in hardware to squeeze every last frame out."
OPTICAL DRIVES	**GSA-4081B** $499 LG Electronics www.lge.com.au 1800 643 156 "This drive lets you write to every type of media. It's as flexible a drive as you could ever want in your machine."	**DR8-A** $259 MSI www.msicomputer.com.au (02) 9748 0070 "Able to write to both + and – media you need not bother with such things as compatibility with this unit."	**X52-MS-8452M** $70 MSI www.compuparts.com.au (02) 9482 2582) "Long live the combo drive. Able to read DVD-ROM disks and write to CD-R it's the perfect budget choice."
MONITORS	**L2010P** $3360 LG Electronics www.lge.com.au 1 800 725 375 "A simply incredible 20" TFT LCD monitor with ultra fast pixel refresh (no blurries), amazing colour definition and can be rotated to portrait."	**L1710B** $670 LG www.lge.com.au 1 800 725 375  "With all the same brilliance and fast pixel refresh of the 20" LG offering, this 17" TFT LCD monitor is perfect as a mid range solution."	**PHILLIPS 107 17"** $160 Phillips www.compuparts.com.au (02) 9482 2582  "When it comes to value the CRT monitor can't be beat and Phillips has been producing excellent units for years."
WANT THAT	**XBOX ADAPTOR** $35 PC Casegear www.pccasegear.com.au (03) 9584 7266  "Want more options with gaming peripherals? Open up your options with a converter that lets you use Xbox devices on your PC."		

INSERT COIN(S)

Prices vary wildly in the real world. To get the best price on computer kit by contacting three different retailers and comparing costs.

- **Compuparts**
  02 9482 2582
  www.ht.com.au
- **Emagen Computuers**
  1300 880 070
  www.emagen.com.au
- **EYO**
  02 9790 8822
  www.eyo.com.au
- **Gamedude**
  07 3387 1500
  www.gamedude.com.au
- **Grays Online Australia**
  Phone N/A
  www.graysonline.com.au
- **Harris Technology**
  1300 139 999
  www.compuparts.com.au
- **I-Tech Australia**
  1800 833 883
  www.i-tech.com.au
- **Razor Prices**
  www.razorprices.com
- **Techbuy Australia**
  02 9648 1818
  www.techbuy.com.au

KEEP YOUR PC FIGHTING FIT

How to get the most from your games machine

BY JERE LAWRENCE & JON HICKS

DO IT... NOW!

Kill pop-ups

POPPERS

PROBLEM Pop-up ads when you're browsing
REMEDY Remove spyware and block ads at source
RESULT Faster web browsing, free of junk

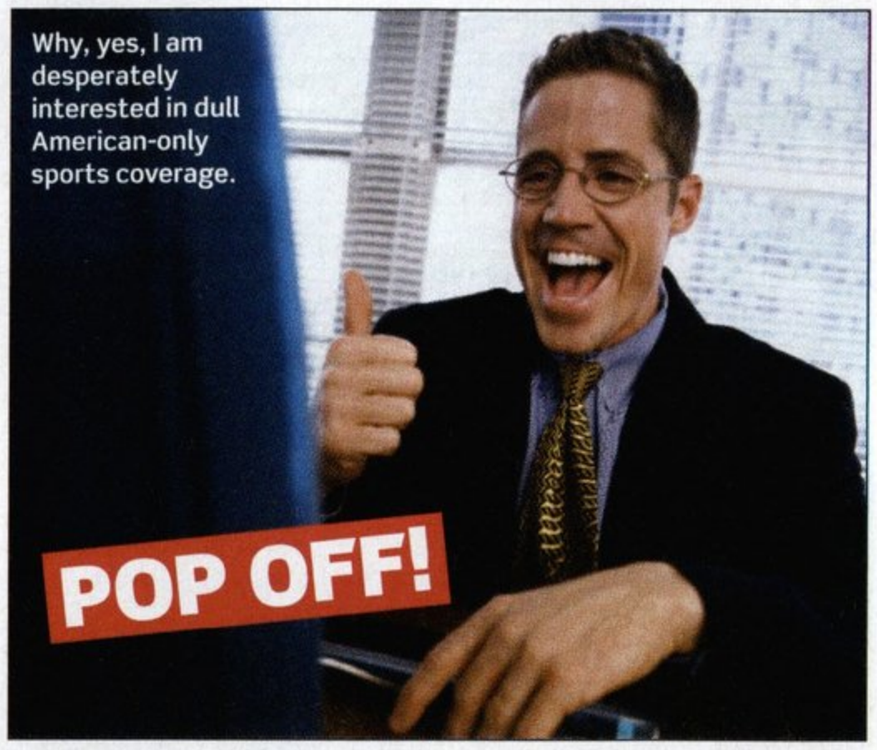
Pop-up ads rank among the lowest forms of internet life – beaten only by spam and profoundly inane forum signatures. They waste time and leech your bandwidth. The first step to getting rid of pop-ups is a quick scan to remove any spyware that might be generating them on your PC. Run SpyBot Search and Destroy from the DVD and nuke any nasties it finds – just take care you don't delete anything that your system actually needs to run. If in doubt, Google the name of the executable.

That just leaves the adverts themselves, which you can treat to a rapid death in several ways. The easiest zap is to install a program that'll block them – there are plenty around, but the handiest is probably the Google Toolbar, which adds a helpful search tool to Internet Explorer at the same time. The downside is this will block things like download windows, although you can temporarily disable it with the Ctrl key.

Alternatively, if you feel like sticking it to The Man, you can use Mozilla FireFox which has built-in popup blocking. It's on the discs, or you can download it from **www.mozilla.org/products/firefox**.

ON THE DISCS Upgrade your games machine with the PCGA Toolkit. Our essential selection of utilities and killer apps > Toolkit.

If you want to stick with Internet Explorer then you can always mute specific sites that you visit regularly. Open IE, go to Tools > Options > Security and click Restricted Sites. Click Sites to add your popup-infested location of choice, choose OK, and choose your level of blockage. You can opt to kill only those evil, popup-spawning ActiveX controls by clicking Custom Level.



Alternatively, if you're using Windows 2000 or XP then you might be getting dubious business offers from genuine Windows error message windows with the title 'Messenger Service.' This is a networking tool that spammers misuse; you can kill it by going to Start > Run > Services.msc, double-clicking the Messenger Service, and setting it to Disable. This is only a short-term fix, however – if spammers can remotely activate this service then there's a sizeable security hole in your system, which you should plug at once with a free firewall from Sygate or ZoneAlarm. You'll find ZoneAlarm in our Toolkit on the DVD.

UTILITY OF THE MONTH

X-FIRE

Chat utilities that let you insant message your friends while gaming: good thing. Chat utilities that kill your framerate, dump you to the desktop or crash the your game: evil works of Satan. Enter X-Fire. Its low-key presence makes it an immediate winner, and it even shows you what your mates are currently playing as well. Server name, player count and ping are all on show, and you can join in the fun directly from the chat window. Most big new games are supported. Find it on this month's coverdiscs.

DO IT... THIS WEEKEND!

Defragment your drive

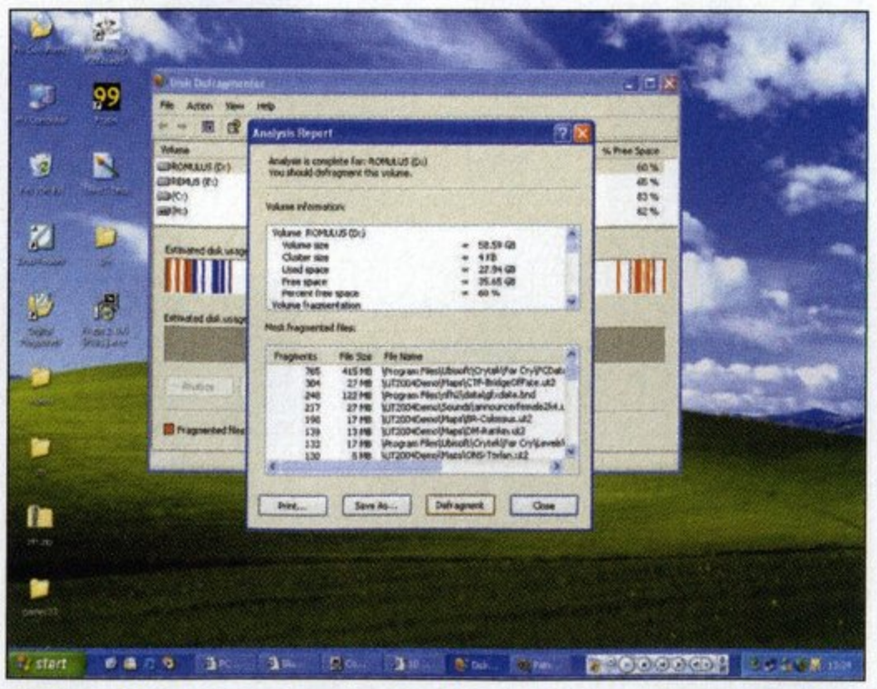
DE-TOX

PROBLEM Long load times and little space
REMEDY Delete the junk and defragment
RESULT More space and faster operation

Hard drive sizes might be on the up, but with game installs measured in gigabytes these days it's all too easy to fill that space. Stuttering framerates are the result. Tidying up the place creates more room and reorganises everything to improve performance.

Handily, Windows can do this for you with the Disk Cleanup tool, which can be found under Start > Programs > Accessories > System Tools. This will seek out junk in the obvious places like the Recycle Bin and temp folders.

Having lightened the load on your hard drive, it's important to tidy up what's left. Your PC's internal filing system gets progressively more disorganised over time, and if you've not touched it since the last format, then there's a very good chance that data is spread all over the surface of the disc. This is bad news because it means that every application, games included, has to spend that bit longer casting around to find everything it needs to run. Improve this situation by running the disk defragmenter, which also dwells in the System Tools folder and can arrange files more efficiently.

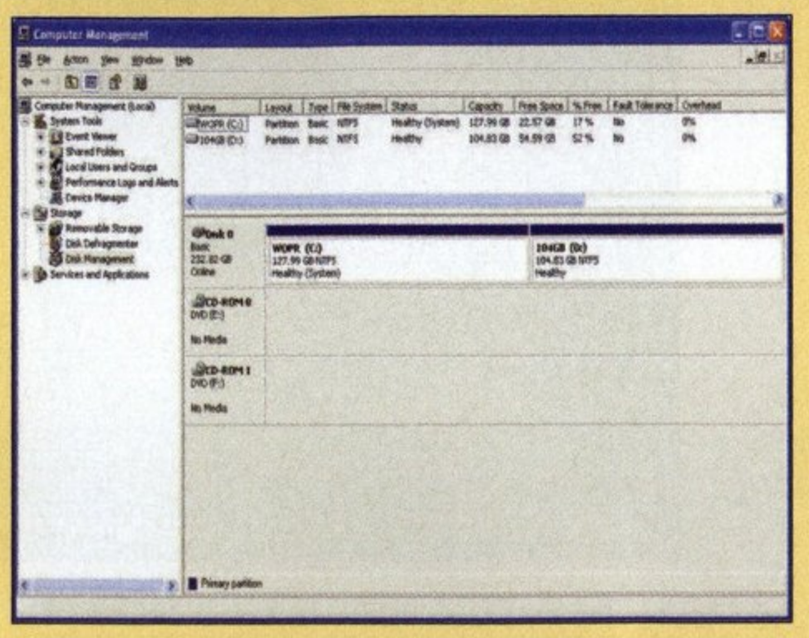


Win XP can identify your most fragmented files – often game files.

Whatever option you use, expect it to take a while – hours, if it's a big disc and highly fragmented.

Essential Tech Tips

TECH SUBJECT
REFORMAT CHECKLIST



Formatting your hard drive is a big job and not one to be entered into lightly. While this is something you must do only at your own risk, PC GAMES ADDICT is here to arm you with some useful tips and suggestions before you wipe that hard drive clean...

1 Backup Everything! It's a big job but somebody has to do it and make sure that you search through your system for MP3s, images, movies and save games. Even if you don't use the "My Documents" folder for your documents make sure you have a gander anyway because a lot of modern games store their saves there. Whatever you do, don't make a folder, put all the files to be backed up in there and then forget to transfer them to disk or external storage.

2 Assemble Drivers Download all the latest drivers for your motherboard, graphics card, modem - anything that needs a driver. Reformatting is a pain in the a[posterior -Ed] so you might as well make it as fruitful an experience as possible. And by installing all the latest drivers on your machine at reinstall peace of mind will ensue knowing there aren't old drivers lurking around the system.

3 Save your settings Write down your Internet settings as many a reformatter has been caught out by this simple task. Important data includes the login userid and password, IP address, Gateway and the DNS servers. Without this data, attempting to reconnect to the Internet will be impossible - jut don't fall into the comedic error some of us have experienced by thinking, "What were my DNS servers again, I'll just jump on the net to find out...."

4 Verify your version Make sure you're using the correct version of Windows for your hardware. Hard disks these days are quite sizable but there are problems with the first version of Windows XP in which it can only access 137GB at a time. Service Pack 1 fixes this but in order to set a partition size greater than 137GB a bootable Windows XP with Service Pack 1 is required.

5 Select a file system If you're using the NTFS file system don't use an old DOS boot disk. Not only will it not recognise the NT partitions but will gleefully erase all your data for you and reformat the drive to FAT. Make sure a Windows bootable CD is used instead.

6 One last look... Always make one last thorough check right before shutting down your PC to reformat. Know the data you want to backup and make a list. Then, as you back it up, check each item off the list. When satisfied you're not going to lose vital data it's time to boot from an operating system CD and at the appropriate time select the format function.

DO IT... THIS MONTH!

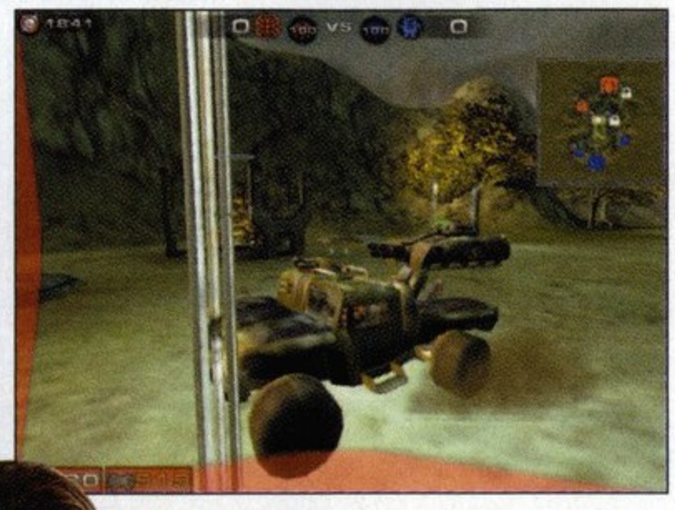
TWEAKERY

Sort UT2004

PROBLEM *UT2004* **runs slowly or not at all**
REMEDY Check your memory, tweak the configuration files
RESULT Reliable, faster fragging on *UT2004*

UT2004 is setting servers alight across the globe, but it's firing a few tempers at the same time. Lots of players are having problems running it. If it won't run at all, then start with the basics: run a full virus check, defrag your hard drive, and kill any programs running in the background. If that doesn't help then beware: *UT2004* is deeply unforgiving of systems below minimum spec or (even slightly) overclocked, with RAM being a particular problem. If you're suffering random crashes then check your memory with Prime95 from **www.mersenne.org/freesoft.htm**. Run the app, check 'Just Stress testing' and then leave it alone for at least an hour. If the program crashes, then you've got a system fault somewhere. Check your memory and CPU timings in the BIOS against the recommended settings in your motherboard manual. If they're all OK, then you may have an overheating problem. You can find out by downloading Motherboard Monitor from **http://mbm.livewiredev.com**.

1 For speed, set all graphics options to Low or Lowest, disable voice recognition and EAX, and uncheck 'Preload Player Skins'.

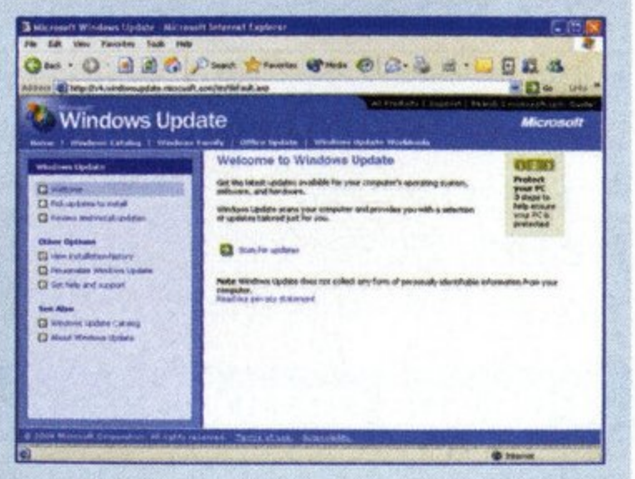


2 If you're having connection problems, make sure the connection is set correctly in the Game menu, and uncheck Dynamic Netspeed - this disrupts the ping and can be problematic. If you want to check whether your ping has been changed, press F1 in-game, and you'll see how your connection compares to everyone else's in-game.

3 Open your UT2004 /System/user.ini file (back it up first), and change the ConfiguredInternetSpeed option. Try 2400 for dial-up, 8000 for ADSL.

TOO EMBARRASSED TO ASK...

"WHAT IS A SERVICE PACK?"



Not to point the finger or anything, but Microsoft do have a nasty tendency to release software that's shot through with bugs and security holes. They rectify post-release with a constant drizzle of patches and fixes. The current strategy is to release new Windows fixes on the second Tuesday of each month (unless the hole is already being exploited) but every so often Microsoft will release a bumper collection in the form of a Service Pack. This includes all previously released patches along with a host of other less critical tweaks. The last one included fixes for known bugs, the ability to uninstall Messenger, and more. The next, Service Pack 2, will arrive in the summer and include a host of security tweaks. The bad news is that they're pretty much essential downloads - not least because script kiddies use them to identify holes and go after those who haven't patched.

ON THE DISCS

Featuring

- 9 top game demos
- 8 great movies
- 19 mods, maps and patches
- 23 must-have tools and utilities
- 4.7Gb of fun!

THE PCGA DISC PROMISE

- We pack every disc with the best new PC entertainment every month. If you can't find an item you were expecting, it probably just missed our deadline and you can bet we'll have it on next issue's disc.
- **PCs are inherently unreliable. Sad but true. So if something on your disc doesn't work then we'll help sort it out. See our Troubleshooter guide over the page to see what help we can offer.**
- We scour the earth to bring you the finest playable demos, movies, mods and utilities that PC gaming can provide. But if we miss a trick then tell our Disc Editor all about it. E-mail **dan@derwenthoward.com.au**

DVD Vs CD

1 DVD **6.12 CDS!**

The world is moving on and CDs can't keep up. Demos, movies and mods are bigger than ever and, inevitably, we can't fit everything on the ancient storage medium.

This issue's DVD beats the CDs by:

+ **5** playable demos
+ **1** One hour movie
+ **3** mods
+ **2** patches
+ **4** software tools

UPGRADE OPTIONS

- Get a subscription. This reduces the cost of the DVD edition by several dollars per issue.
- **Get a DVD drive. There's one for only $70 in our Big Gear Hunt buyer's guide.**
- Miss out.

CD & DVD

THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS

Careful, that dining table might spot you Garrett!

WHAT IS IT?

A sneak peek into last issue's game of the month, the third chapter in the chronicles of Garrett, medieval master thief.

DEMO GOALS

First come to grips with the controls via a tutorial mission that also kickstarts the story. Then take on the first true mission, infiltrating a heavily guarded estate.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

- The two most basic things you can do to remain hard to detect are to crouch and creep along. Creeping is very slow, and not the best idea if you're trying to make a move down a well lit street that's being patrolled.
- Both the dagger and the blackjack can be used to quietly take down somebody who's not aware of your presense. Note that the dagger leaves blood stains that can be spotted.
- Listen to the conversations of those that inhabit the locales you seek to sneak through. They often give away key information.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Can you complete a level without being seen at all?

- If you're going to try killing guards with arrows, make sure you get a clear shot at their head. It's the difference between a quick kill or a tough fight.
- If you're having trouble seeing what's in the dark places you're sending Garrett, don't forget to use his mechanical eye which offers limited night vision and zooming.

README

Developer Ion Storm
Publisher Eidos
Size: 426MB
Requirements 1.4GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **Left mouse** Use weapon ■ **Right mouse** Interact ■ **Space** Jump ■ **Shift** Walk ■ **I** Use item ■ **V** Change view ■ **R** Wall flatten ■ **Ctrl** Creep ■ **X** Crouch ■ **Mousewheel** Cycle weapons

DVD

BESIEGER

It takes a blend of siege weaponry and troops to win.

WHAT IS IT?

A real-time strategy game that sees the Vikings and the Cimmerians in a medieval warfare game rife with Norse mythology.

DEMO GOALS

This demo includes two single-player campaigns, and an impressive four multi-player modes including: Siege, Deathmatch, Artifact and Battle.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

- Your workers are your troops-in-waiting, and you can't just build them! Since you need them before you can create a warrior of some sort, you'll need to have plenty of houses and gardens around so more can appear. It's best to have plenty of these guys handy so you can whip up troops in a jiffy,
- Counter-attacks are one of the most important strategies to master in siege warfare. If the enemy is at the gates, don't use all of your forces to repel them. Wait for the attack to fail then set upon your enemy as they retreat.
- Some units are clearly more valuable than others, particularly those that manage to survive a few battles. Keep experienced units alive to maintain an effective fighting force.
- Just as in Warcraft III hero units are vital to your success. Not only are they the most powerful individual units in the game, gaining experience and extra powers, they bolster the effect of other units around them, making them invaluable out in the fray.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Max out every hero unit to see which ones are the best.

README

Developer Primal Interactive
Publisher Dreamcatcher
Size 263MB
Requirements 1.0GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **Left Mouse** Select ■ **Right Mouse** Give orders ■ **Z** Select all units on screen ■ **Enter** Go to last event ■ **Wheel Mouse** Zoom ■ **Hold Wheel Mouse** Rotate camera

CD & DVD

GROUND CONTROL II: OPERATION EXODUS

WHAT IS IT?

The second *Ground Control II: Operation Exodus* demo, this time offering an insight into how the game plays as a multiplayer title.

DEMO GOALS

Rain death down upon online adversaries and your mates, once you've checked out the tutorial of course.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Use infantry alone to win a match. It's not impossible, just damn hard.

Unlucky, only the Terrans° get to control these mechs.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

› Take advantage of your secondary fire modes. A group of standard infantry can take on enemy troops and vehicles at once by simply flicking between the two modes – they'll intelligently fire their rocket launchers at armoured targets when present. Learn how long the firing cycle is and you can be firing standard round inbetween each rocket.

› Victory location and dropship landing zones are vital. These are your peons and gold mines. Keep holding these locations and you'll always have reinforcements on the way.

› While holding higher ground or using building at tactical choke points works, do not play too defensively. You gain AP (acquisition points) by taking Victory locations, not by waiting around.

README

Developer Massive
Publisher Vivendi
Size Microsoft
Requirements 800MHz CPU, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card w/T&L

CONTROLS **Left Mouse** Select ■ **Right Mouse** Attack/move ■ **L** Load units ■ **U** Unload units ■ **E** Meld units ■ **Ctrl+1-0** Assign group ■ **1-0** Select group ■ **C** Move backwards

CD & DVD

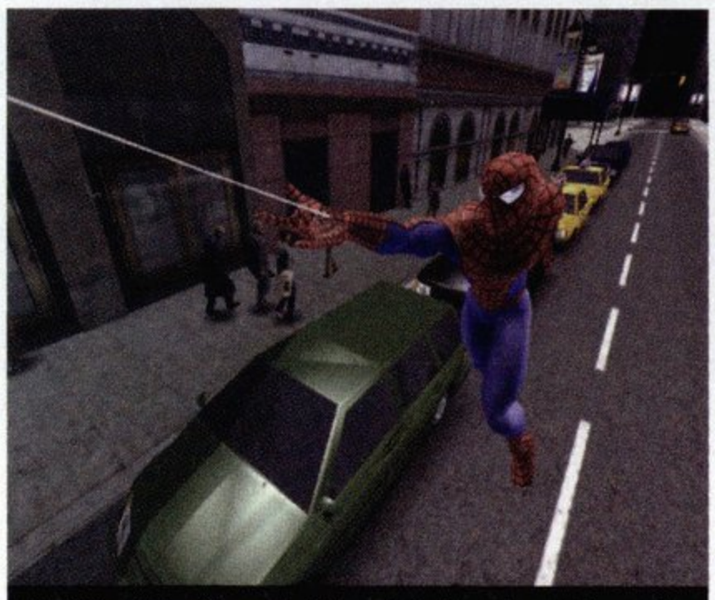
SPIDER-MAN 2

°WHAT IS IT?

We could say yet another heinous movie-license cash-in jobbie, but we'd be wrong. *Spider-Man 2* is a genuine evolution of the first game, with a bunch of *GTA*-like elements.

DEMO GOALS

Help guide Spidy through two levels taken from the full game, mastering the new web swinging system and checking out the new side-quests.



You'd try it too if you had to catch the subway to work.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

› A bit of high-school level physics should help you come to grips with the sort of insane air and speeds Spider-Man can reach with some careful strategic swinging. You can swing off anything, so put your imagination to use.

› There are two different swing types available. Enter the options menu to choose between the two.

› If you're facing an enemy on a nearby platform but can't afford to waste your web swinging over to him, use a jump attack as this will take you right to the thug in question and strike them in one move.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Use the physics system to hurl Spidy clear over a building!

› Think about Spider-Man's abilities and learn how to use them in varying situations. You don't always need to change what you're doing to take down an adversary. Use your web in many ways.

› When fighting a group of enemies take out the guys with guns first, as they pose the greatest threat.

README

Developer Fizz Factor
Publisher Activision
Size 164MB
Requirements 750MHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card ▶

CONTROLS **Left Mouse** Action ■ **Right mouse** Jump ■ **Double right mouse** Double jump ■ **W, A, S, D** Move ■ **Right Mouse -> Left Mouse** Jump attack ■ **Space** Dodge

ⓘ DISC EXTRAS

More than just demos...

+4 mods

New versions of *Revolt* for *Call of Duty*, *Red Orchestra* for UT2004, *The Specialists* and *Natural Selection* for *Half-Life* .

REVOLT *Call of Duty* meets the Middle-East.

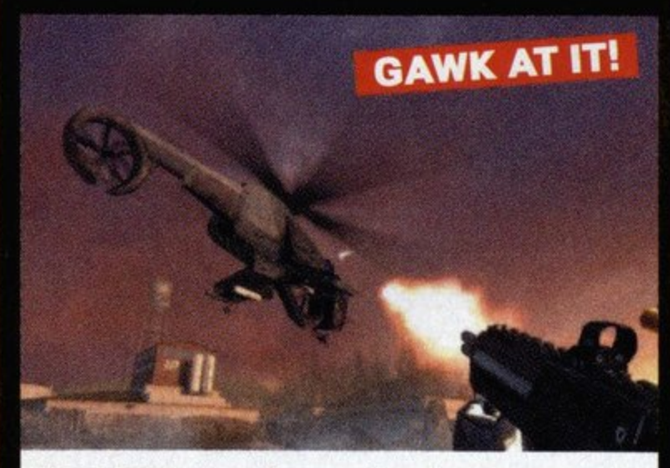
+8 movies

Doesn't sound like much, but one is over an hour long! – New trailers include: *The Sims 2*, *F.E.A.R*, *Splinter Cell 3*, *Shellshock Nam '67*.

HALF-LIFE DONE QUICK In just over an hour...

+8 galleries

Ever want to get your hands on the glorious imagery that inhabits these hallowed pages? Now you can...



HALF-LIFE 2 More than worthy of a goosey gander

+Patches

› Hot new game running like a dog? We've included fixes for:
Battlefield Vietnam 1.02
Lock On 1.02
Painkiller 1.2
Perimeter 1.01
Thief: Deadly Shadows 1.1
Unreal Tournament 2004 v3236

+Bonus features

› Want to play Valve games such as Counter-Strike online? You're going to need the Steam client, included in our Mods, Maps & Utils section

See the back of your box for full disc contents.

Disc page contents refer to DVD edition. CD contents restricted by size.

NEW!

THE TOOLKIT

All the software you need for a top-notch games PC

Game apps

Match-making .....X-Fire
Voice communicator .....Skype
Chat software .....Trillian
Screen grabber .....IrfanView
Emulation .....Dosbox, ScummVM
Demo viewer .....Demofreak
Video capture .....FRAPS

Performance

Download manager .....BitTorrent
Benchmarking 3DMark
Uninstaller.....EasyUninstall 6
Video card driver.....Radeon, nVidia

Security

Virus checker .....AVG
Anti-spam .....Spybot Search & Destroy
Anti-spyware .....AdAware
Anti-popup.....Coolweb Shredder
Firewall.....Zone Alarm

Media Management

File compressor .....WinRar
Picture viewer .....IrfanView
PDF viewer .....Acrobat Reader
Web browser.....Mozilla Firefox
FTP client .....Smart FTP
Email client.....Mozilla Thunderbird
Media player .....WinAmp

TROUBLE SHOOTER

Is your coverdisc playing up? Help is at hand

1 If the menu program does not automatically start, the autorun may be disabled on your PC. Go to the START/RUN command on the task-bar and type D:\IERUNNER.EXE (where D is the drive letter).

2 For problems with an individual demo or application, refer to the Help section on the disc. Also ensure your drivers and DirectX version are up-to-date.

3 If your disc is defective then return it to the address below, along with a description of the fault and an SAE:
Disc Department, PC Games Addict, Reply Paid 1035, Bondi Junction NSW 1355

4 As soon as we discover issues with programs on the disc, we will post solutions on the **PC Games Addict** website. Check here to see if there's a quick fix:
http://www.pcga.com.au/

We can only provide assistance with technical problems *directly* related to our coverdiscs. The PCGA discs have been thoroughly tested and certified 'virus free' by an independent organisation. We recommend that you always run a up-to-date virus checker on ANY software before running it. Derwent Howard Pty Ltd cannot accept any responsibility for disruption, damage and/or loss to your data or your computer system which may occur while using these discs, the programs or the data on them. Ensure that you have backups of data contained on your hard drives before running *any* new software.

DVD

SINGLES: FLIRT UP YOUR LIFE

WHAT IS IT?

A trial of the upcoming *Singles: Flirt up Your Life* from Eidos. If you get a kick out of virtual voyeurism, you can register the trial into the full product.

DEMO GOALS

Being a trial version that can be registered into the full release this your goals are simply to decide if you like this virtual "Do your flatmate" simulation enough to shell out for it.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Get out more often and find yourself a real-life partner!

Why spend on a real partner when virtual ones put out?

PERFORMANCE TIPS

› Like real life, sticking your hand up someone's skirt and rummaging around to see if you find something you like won't work... Not until you've made a positive impression.
› Becoming a breeder is not the sole object of the game. Building up the different meters that provide feedback on your 'relationship' results in all manner of new interactions.
› Just like the Sims, Singles take ludicrous amounts of time to perform the basic actions required to get out of the house and make it to work. Allow about three hours for showering, breakfast and incidentals.
› Automate the boring everyday actions.
› Not being homophobic, we should point out there are two gay characters to choose from, one male, one female. They can bust a move on the hetero characters in the usual manner.

README

Developer Deep Silver
Publisher Eidos
Size 415MB
Requirements 1GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **Left mouse** Select/action ■ **Right Mouse** Move camera ■ **Arrow Keys** Move camera ■ **Wheel mouse** Zoom in/out

DVD

SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WWII

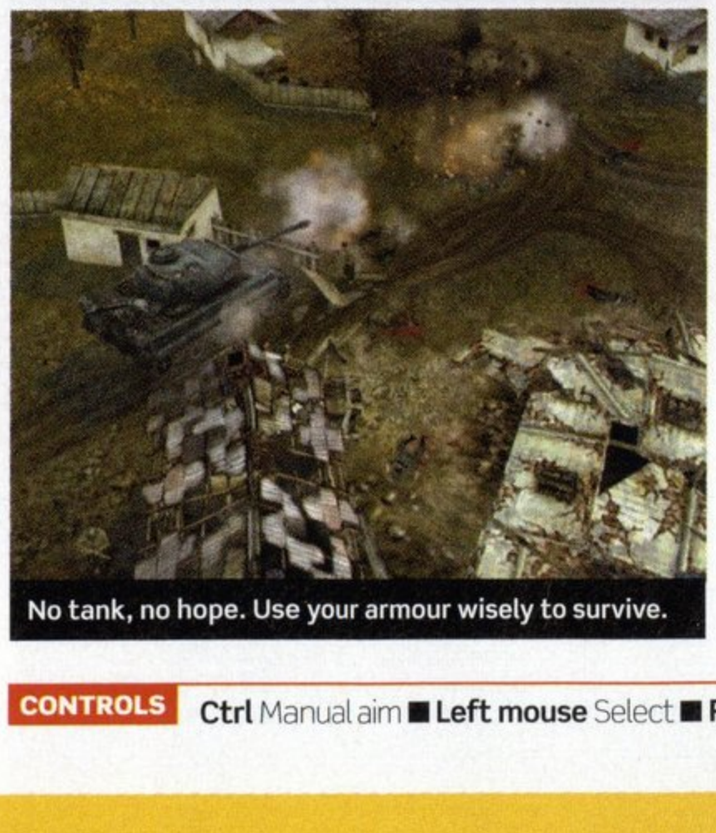
WHAT IS IT?

A solitary single-player mission, controlling three US soldiers about to face an onslaught of German troops.

DEMO GOALS

Survival is all that matters, but that said unless you are able to master the art of bringing down enemy troops with the utmost efficiency, you've got Buckley's and none of making it back across the Atlantic.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Have all three of your heroic little servicemen survive this hell!



No tank, no hope. Use your armour wisely to survive.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

› Take advantage of your environment. The sandbags make for handy protective walls to fire from, but the gun instalations are the true ticket to success.
› When utilising either a tank or a gun emplacement, be sure to conserve your ammo, both machine gun rounds and the heavy shells. If you fire willy-nilly you'll be left facing superior forces with little means to take them out.
› Don't forget that your soldiers can use grenades. They're not quite as effective as shells, but when used carefully can finish off armoured units.
› Position your tank carefully. Once you send it to a location after the first in-game cut-scene you will not be able to move it again, with the turret being the only thing that still works.
› Try keep your allied forces alive. The more of them present, the less fire aimed your way.

README

Developer 1C
Publisher Codemasters
Size 225MB
Requirements 1GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **Ctrl** Manual aim ■ **Left mouse** Select ■ **Right mouse** Fire

CD & DVD

KREED

WHAT IS IT?
A futuristic FPS from an unknown Russian developer breaking into the industry with it's debutant title. We somehow doubt that this particular effort is going to catapult Burut to stardom, especially with STALKER Shadows of Chernobyl looming.

DEMO GOALS
There are both single player and multi-player modes availab le in the demo. The three multi-player modes are CTF, deathmatch and team deathmatch, with two maps to play on. Single-player includes two missions and an introduction to save us giving you the backstory right here. Lucky that.

Meet new lifeforms. Misunderstand them. Kill them!

DEMO CHALLENGE
Become a top commander and lead your team to victory.

PERFORMANCE TIPS
› The single player missions see you start out with a complete arsenal. Take advantage of that.
› You'll want to adjust the mouse sensitivity. Default setting requires about 4 meters of desk space to look at something at your feet.
› Something hitting you and you're not sure where from? Beware strange rolling alien ball things with teeth muching on your feet.
› Much of the single player demo involves battling aliens in corridors with few places to dodge. Typically a bad scenario in first-person shooters, fortunately Burut have included a flame-thrower into the array of weapons. Particularly handy against the perviously mentioned rolling alien ankle-biting things.

README
Developer Burut
Publisher Acclaim
Size 198MB
Requirements 1GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 32 Mb 3D card, Win XP/2K

CONTROLS **Left mouse** Fire ■ **Right mouse** Alt fire ■ **J** Diary ■ **E** Use ■ **Space** Jump ■ **M** Medkit ■ **G** Frag grenade ■ **Ctrl** Crouch ■ **1-9** Weapons

DVD

STRENGTH & HONOUR

Let no tiny collection of pixels leave the screen alive...

WHAT IS IT?
A tactical wargame that looks decidedly like a indie-developed Rome: Total War, using all the same basic principles. Movement on a world map, controlling individual battles in real time and formation tactics proving paramount.

DEMO GOALS
This 30-day trial demo includes one of three single-player campaigns (Queen of the Nile - 44BC), multiplayer battle mode and a Historical battle, all involving Rome and Egyptian forces, the full game will include several other ancient civilisations.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Bring down the Roman war machine with Egyptian forces.

PERFORMANCE TIPS
› Have a good think about what role each unit type is meant to be fulfilling and what you're actually getting them to do. Archers should be attacking from behind foot soldiers rather than winding up in a toe-to-toe encounter.
› Holding higher ground helps ranged units back in times like these where the arange of one's weapons is rather limited. If you can make the enemy come up a hill to approach your archers, you'll take more out before they get to you.
› In the campaign, be sure to explore the benefits of building all the different structures you can construct in your cities. Superior tactics usually win, but having superior forces is even better.

README
Developer Magitech Corp
Publisher TBA
Size 263MB
Requirements 1GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **a/z** Raise/lower camera altitude ■ **+/-** Increase/decrease game speed ■ **,/.** Rotate left/right ■ **Pause** Pause ■ **A/Z** Highest/lowest camera altitude

RETRO DEMO
Relive the landmark titles from PC gaming history

ZangbandTK
› **WHAT'S THE GAME?** Classic dungeon-hack style gaming. Find it in Toolkit, DIY & Extras.
› **WHY WE CHOSE IT** › Because this game is proof that cutting-edge graphics are not necessary to create an addictive RPG that revolves around building up a character to a state of omnipotence.
› **DEMO GOALS** Stay alive! Like most *Hack*-style games, your character is a bit of a corpse waiting to happen. Start off cautiously, or start often.

ZANGBANDTK Giving ASCII nasties what for!

A MAP MADE IN HEAVEN
For beautifully balanced biffo

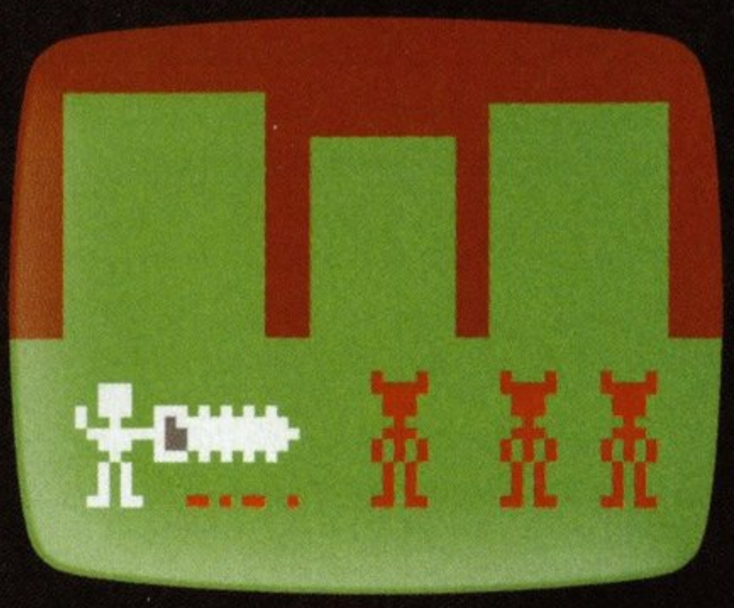
› **GAME** *Warcraft III: The Frozen Throne*
› **MAPS** *Dead Locked*, *Gold Rush*, *Tower Defence* and *Egg Hunt*.

TOWER DEFENCE Not just another *War 3* map!

› **GAME** *Call of Duty*
› **MAPS** *Street War*, *Stanjel*, *Neunen*, *the Second Coming* and *Bellicourt*.

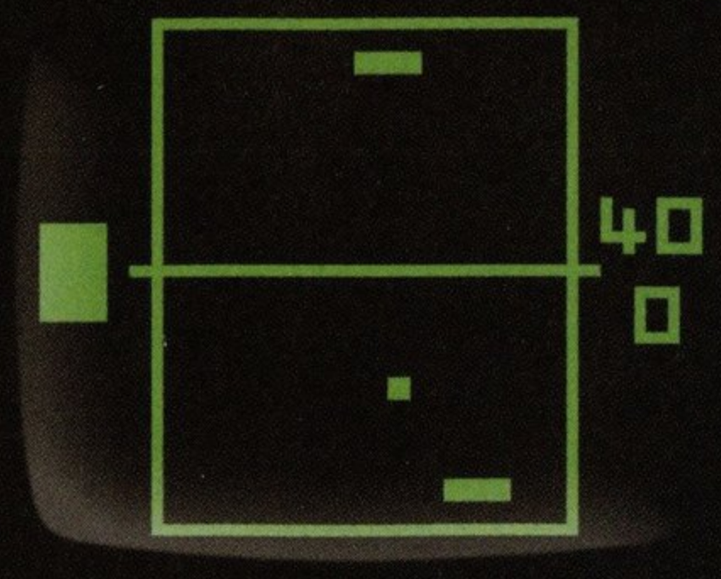
BE YE A FORGER OF MAD MAPS?
Do you possess the deft touch of the creator? If so, and you'd like to see it included on our cover disc, email us at pcga@derwenthoward.com.au, with the subject line "MAPS", your map attached *, and details we should know about your creation.

* If attachments turn out to add up to a file size of over 3MB, let us know before sending them on, as there's no gaurantee we will be able to include it. Naturally we'll endeavour to include what we can.

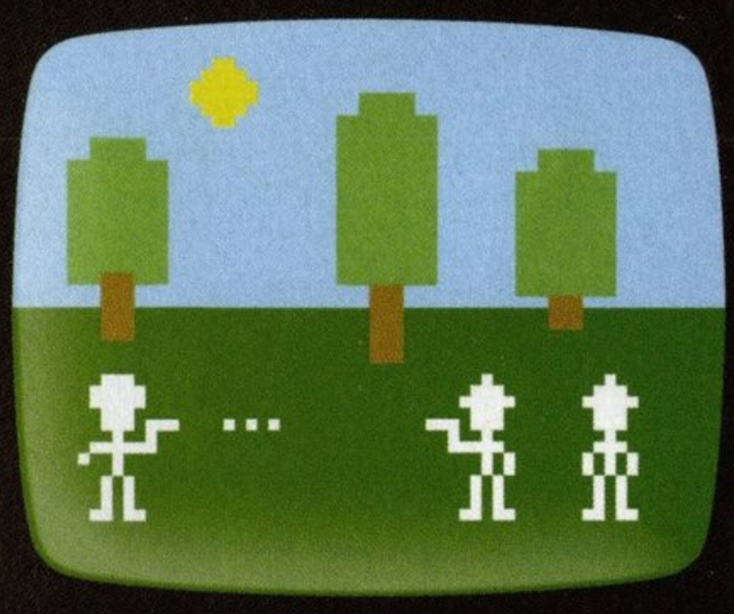


DOOM III

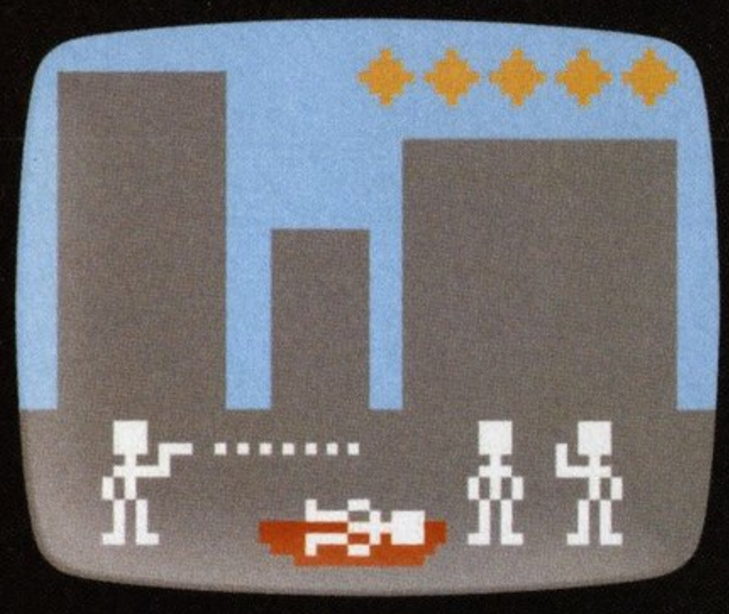
NEVERWINTER NIGHTS



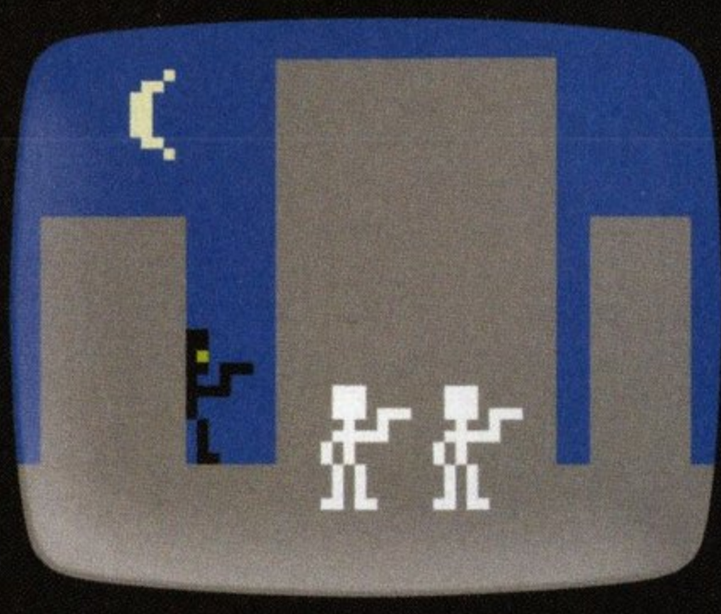
VIRTUA TENNIS



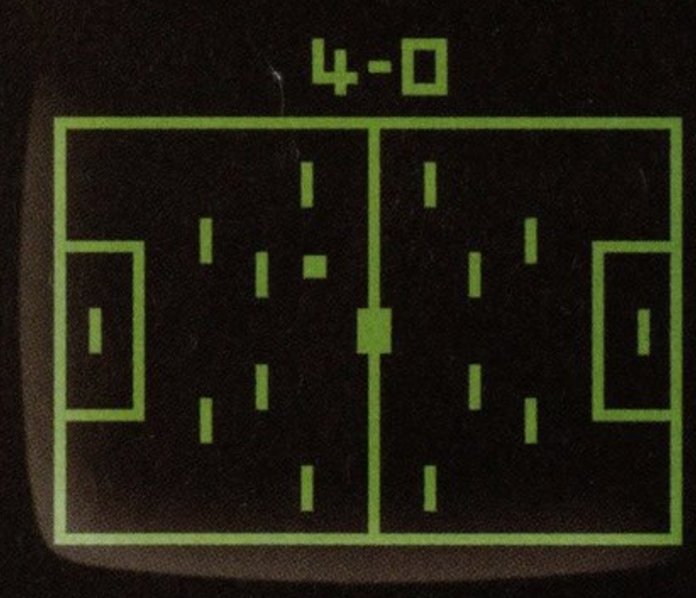
BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM



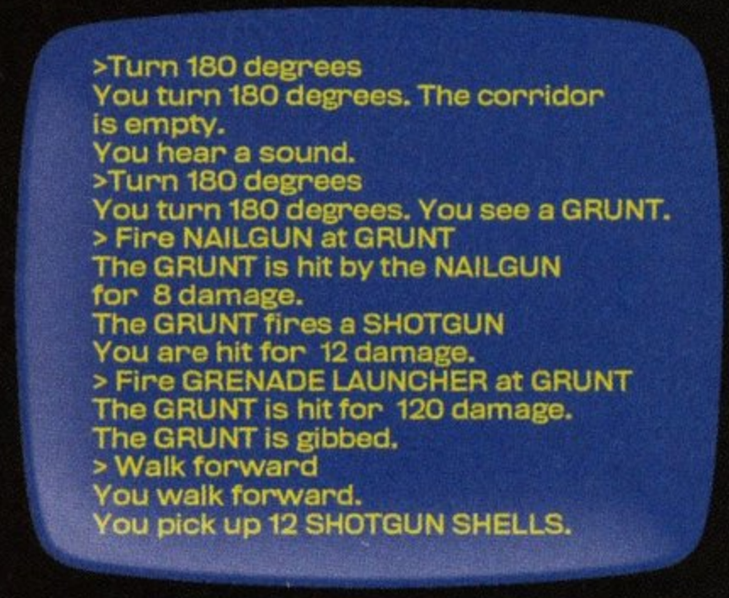
GTA VICE CITY



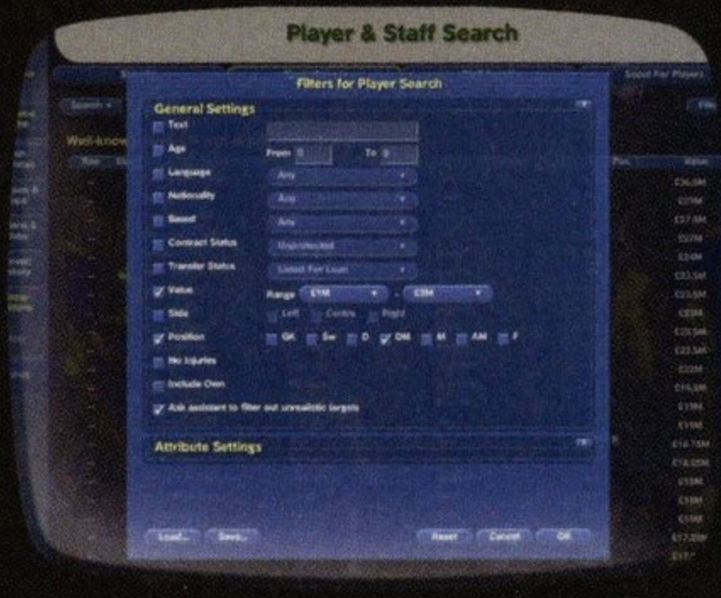
SPLINTER CELL



FIFA 2004

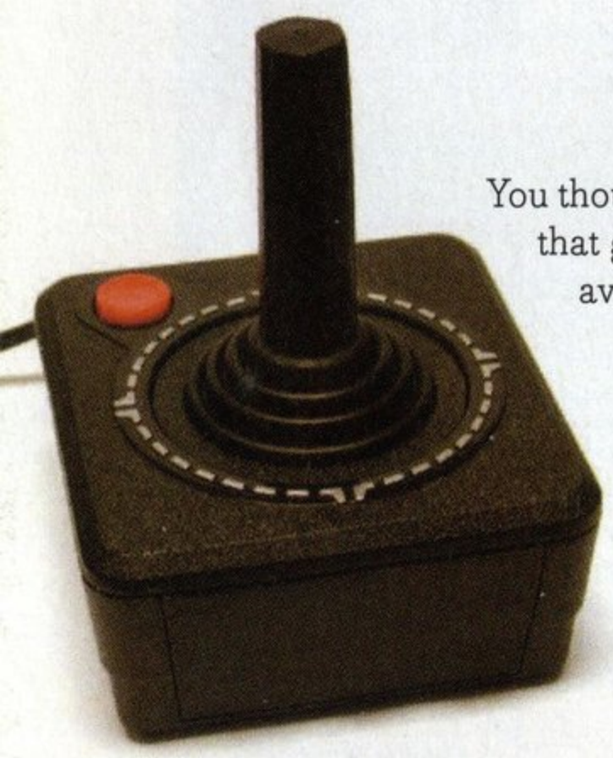

>Turn 180 degrees
You turn 180 degrees. The corridor is empty.
You hear a sound.
>Turn 180 degrees
You turn 180 degrees. You see a GRUNT.
> Fire NAILGUN at GRUNT
The GRUNT is hit by the NAILGUN for 8 damage.
The GRUNT fires a SHOTGUN
You are hit for 12 damage.
> Fire GRENADE LAUNCHER at GRUNT
The GRUNT is hit for 120 damage.
The GRUNT is gibbed.
> Walk forward
You walk forward.
You pick up 12 SHOTGUN SHELLS.

QUAKE (TEXT ONLY)



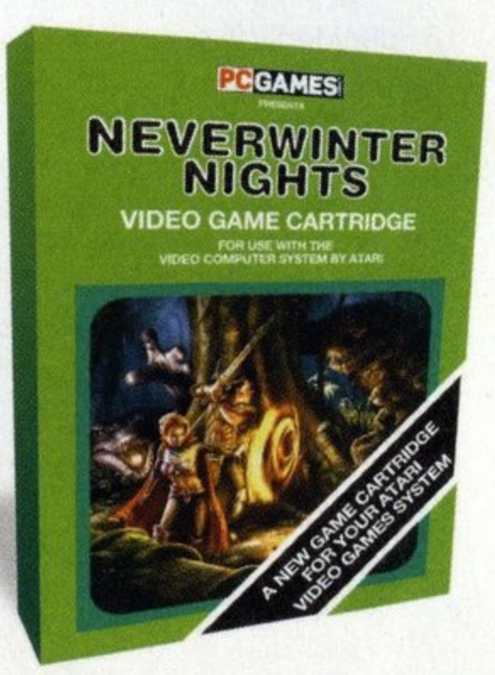
CHAMP MANAGER

TODAY'S GAMES. YESTERDAY'S HARDWARE GENIUS.



You thought it was all over for your old hardware. At least until August 18th. But it's not, now that games like *Battlefield: Vietnam* TM, *Neverwinter Nights* TM and *EverQuest* TM are available for the Atari Colecovision, lovingly converted by Rose-Tinted Productions.

The best gameplay on the worst hardware.
That's the Rose-Tinted promise.


PC GAMES
NEVERWINTER NIGHTS
VIDEO GAME CARTRIDGE
FOR USE WITH THE VIDEO COMPUTER SYSTEM BY ATARI
A NEW GAME CARTRIDGE FOR YOUR ATARI VIDEO GAMES SYSTEM

Rose Tinted Productions do not recognise and routinely abuse all trademarks. Screenshots may not resemble in-game images. All rights reserved (for a table for two at Luigi's Online Bistro, 8.30, this Friday. I'll be wearing a white carnation. You bring the wine).

Tsunami Dream

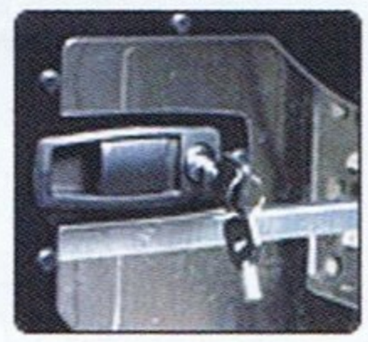
Designer Case by Thermaltake

Dual 12cm Cooling Fans

400w Power Supply Included

Slide-in Cage

Dual USB2.0, IEEE firewire 1394, Audio and Speaker Ports



Lockable Side Panels

VA3000SNA

VA3000BNA

P/N	VA3000SWA, VA3000SNA, VA3000BWA, VA3000BNA
Drive Bays	11. External 4 x 5.25", 2 x 3.5". Internal 5 x 3.5"
Net Weight	6kg (13.2lb)
Motherboards	Micro ATX, Standard ATX & Extended ATX (Dual CPU)
Dimension	(H*W*D) 495 x 210x 478 mm
Cooling System (5 Fans)	Front (intake). 120x120x25 mm, 2000rpm, 21dBA. Rear (exhaust). Blue LED fan, 120x120x25 mm, 2000rpm, 21dBA. Side (intake). 90x90x25 mm, 1800rpm, 21dBA
Material	Chassis - 0.8 mm fully aluminium
Features	Mirror coating. Screw less slots for easy assembly. 7x 3.5" slide-in cage. Dual USB 2.0, IEEE 1394. Firewire, Audio & Speaker ports. 400w power supply included

VA3000SWA

VA3000BWA

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"Memory of the Year" – ViperLair
"Best Performance Memory" – Legit Reviews
"Best Memory Maker for 2003" – HKEPC Hardware

XL memory

Lower latency = Faster Performance

XL - Best for AMD Athlon64 Systems

Corsair's new XL Xtra-Low Latency memory offers the fastest possible memory timings for optimal performance on AMD Athlon64 systems.

Up to 38% performance increase in some applications!
(determined using PCMark04)

PART NUMBER	SPEED	SIZE	LATENCY
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TWINX1024-3200XL	PC-3200	1024MB	2-2-2-5
CMX512-3200XL	PC-3200	512MB	2-2-2-5

XMS2

Higher Clock Speed = Faster Performance

XMS2 - Best for Intel 915/925X Systems

Corsair's new XMS2 DDR2 memory offers the highest clock speeds, for optimal performance on compatible Intel systems.

PART NUMBER	SPEED	SIZE	LATENCY
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TWIN2X512-4200	PC-4200	512MB	4-4-4-12
CM2X512-4200	PC-4200	512MB	4-4-4-12
CM2X256-4200	PC-4200	256MB	4-4-4-12

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	CPL	(03) 8542 8688	www.cpl.net.au
QLD	GameDude	(07) 3387 1500	www.gamedude.com.au
	Umart Online	(07) 3369 3928	www.umart.com.au
TAS	Tasmanian Principal Comp.	(03) 6234 5677	www.tasmanianpc.com.au

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